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Holy Lucre

A DRAMA

IN

FOUR ACTS

BY

EDWARD STAATS DE GROTE TOMPKINS

AUTHOR OF

"Through David's Realm," "An Honest Hypocrite,"

"Protected Interests," Etc.

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BOSTON.

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INTRODUCTION.

The public at present demands entertainment and instruction. Unfortunately no dramatic writer seems to have succeeded in supplying both demands. When a play is stupid it is labeled a problem play, and the public endures the tedium. Wrong construction is condoned because of the moral. But why is it not possible to have a problem in a play properly constructed and fitted to please? The author has that task in mind. The rules of dramatic composition have been rigidly followed, and the problem has been made striking, and, it is hoped, not tedious. The subject of this play is *WORTH versus WEALTH*.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

ANNETTE PALMERSTON, a young American.
EARL OF TANGUAY, a young Englishman.
REVEREND HOUGHTON, an American clergyman.
MRS. HOUGHTON, his wife.
LADY MARY JOHNSON, a sister of Tanguay.
MRS. COURTENAY, who has great social influence.
LORD NEVERS, her friend.
BABY, her daughter, very innocent.
JOHNNY, young, hence foolish.
MRS. BAMPTON, a climber.
MR. BAMPTON, a necessary attachment, and given to soliloquy.
JEANETTE, Miss Palmerston's maid.
MONTE, a valet.
DUMBELL, a butler.

ACT I.

SCENE.—Hall at Clampton, afternoon tea.

ACT II.

SCENE.—Library, same evening.

ACT III.

SCENE.—Terrace, next morning.

ACT IV.

SCENE.—Hall, shortly before luncheon.

SCENARIO.

The Marquis of San Lucar is an American clergyman who has inherited vast wealth from a long forgotten uncle in South America, made a marques by Dom Pedro. His wealth, something of a burden, gives him an opportunity to study human nature in his true character—that of a clergyman. He gets a cultivated young woman of great personal charm to rent a large place in England, and gather about her the leading society lights, and he and his wife appear in simple guise. The story hinges on the love of an impoverished Earl for the charming friend. The first act shows the mutual impression they make on each other, and owing to his pride and her lack of wealth the difficulty of their marrying. The second act reveals the machinations of a poor nobleman who, through a detective disguised as his valet, discloses the fact that the heiress is not rich, and raises the question of her character, by showing her bills are paid by the marquis. The third act develops the plot, and the confession of the clergyman leaves little room for doubt that the original idea was true. This gives the earl a chance to show his manliness, which he does. The fourth act straightens out the tangle, and relieves the earl of the suspicion she is not what she seems, and gives him an opportunity to retrieve his fortunes without marrying for money.

The climax in the first act is where the heroine is impressed with the instinctive nobleness of the earl's character.

The climax in the second act is where he defends her character in the face of evidence.

The climax of the third act is where he stands true to his love in spite of seemingly overwhelming evidence.

The climax of the fourth act is where she learns that he has stood true in spite of everything, and shows her devotion to his noble character.

HOLY LUCRE

ACT I.

SCENE.—*Hall at Clampton. Tea things arranged. DUMBELL enters and looks around.*

Dumbell. When Hi took service at Clampton Hi came well recommended, hand Hi thought it was ha juke Hi was to serve. (*Bangs a chair on the floor. JEANNETTE enters from the other side.*).

Jeanette. You 'ave a poor job eef I 'eer right, Meester Dumbell. Jukes, as you call them, are veery poor picking.

Dumbell. Hi haint thinkin', Miss, that juke his hany kind of ha bird has you call hit—

Jeanette. But they say ee was a bird, however. Ee used to make the money fly an zen ee took to flying 'imself—Ha— Ha. Zat ees vy we got zees place, don you see? You Eenglis— are so slow.

Dumbell. Hi haint slow, Miss. Hi can see things, hand things hare mighty queer with that poor minister hand is cheap wife. 'Ow hany respectable leddy can 'ave sich things around Hi don't see.

Jeanette. Oh! you don Meester Dumbell, vell, I vill tell you somezing. Ze leddy as you call her knows vat she es about, see? (*Pulling down one eyelid and gazing at Dumbell mischievously. He looks at her admiringly and tries to catch her when MONTE enters.*)

Dumbell. Ho, Mister Monte, she his that haggravating! (*MONTE strokes his moustache and smiles.*)

Monte. To you, perhaps! I can't say I find her so.

Jeannette. You naughty boy! Just because I like boys. Don't you believe him, Meester Dumbell. We were just having a serious talk. Meester Dumbell says he only waits on jukes. Forsooth. I say money is money, don't you?

Monte. Rather! and jukes are very poor just now.

Dumbell. (*Miffed at their chaff.*) So are ministers and ministers' leddies.

Jeanette. You needn't be sneering at ministers' leddies. Miss Palmerston gives me two shillings every time I button up the leddy's dress, and she tells me to be very polite, and I am very polite when I get two shillings. So now, Meester Dumbell! (*Making him a courtesy with a significant glance.*)

Monte. (*With a quizzical air.*) She seems very fond of her poor relation?

Jeanette. They aren't relations, just friends, and she says they are such nice people. I like butter on my bread and I like it thick. See? as the Americans says.

Monte. And these poor friends are the butter on your bread? They look pretty thin to me. (*With a contemptuous air designed to draw her out. DUMBELL listens intently.*)

Jeanette. (*With a toss of her head.*) They are thick enough for me!

Monte. (*With a sneer.*) Two shillings don't seem very thick to me.

Jeanette. No, but two pounds do to me!

Dumbell. Two pounds! Hi aven't seen two pounds from a soul since Hi 'ave been 'ere.

Jeanette. That's because you live with a juke. In America we would say juke rhymed with fluke.

Dumbell. Fluke! (*Shocked.*) Fluke rhyming with 'is grace.

Monte. (*Still curious.*) And where do you get your two pounds from? I hope his reverence isn't forgetting his cloth.

Jeanette. (*Indignantly.*) Never in this world, Meester Monte. Never in this world! I get all my money from my dear mistress. Every time she tells me to be nice to the poor friends she puts two pounds into my hand.

Monte. (*Aside.*) The deuce! His lordship will be interested. She's generous. Generosity isn't human. Americans are fools with their money.

Jeanette. Not too foolish for me. (*Executes a pas de seul.*)

Monte. Hush! they are coming. (*All go out. Enter BABY and JOHNNY.*)

Baby. Oh! Johnny, you are so naughty.

Johnny. I am?

Baby. Yes, you haven't been near me for ever so long.
(*Pouts.*)

Johnny. Now, sweetheart, don't fret. Why, I saw you at lunch.

Baby. At lunch! Why, that was ages ago.

Johnny. Only three hours.

Baby. But you haven't said a word to me since—— since——

Johnny. Forgotten, I bet!

Baby. No I haven't. No I haven't. Not since I had that fatherly talk with old Mr. Bampton. So there!

Johnny. But I don't like your fatherly talks with old Bampton.

Baby. (*Viciously.*) Nor do I like your filial devotions to Lady Mary.

Johnny. Lady Mary? Why, sweetheart, that's business.

Baby. I don't know what you mean.

Johnny. Nor I. (*With a grin.*) It doesn't mean any more than those philosophical pow-pows Nevers has with your mamma.

Baby. Now, Johnny, what do you mean? You mean something. (*Very impressively.*) I am sure you mean something.

Johnny. I mean nothing much, but his highness doesn't believe in philosophical conversations. He says they are very bad for the morals.

Baby. Why, Johnny! Morals? I don't see how philosophy can hurt morals. But I am sure the prince never talks philosophy.

Johnny. So am I. What does he talk of to your mamma?

Baby. (*Opening her eyes wide.*) Why, how do I know? He never talks to me at all. Just pats me on the shoulder and says, "now run along, little girl."

Johnny. And you run? (*With a sneer.*)

Baby. Now, Johnny, you are perfectly horrid. I don't understand you at all. Mamma would not like your manner.

Johnny. And the prince does not bother any more with you, I suppose?

Baby. Oh! he kisses me sometimes—— Just in a fatherly way.

Johnny. I don't think fatherly ways are nice.

Baby. (Sharply.) No, nor I motherly ways.

Johnny. Come now, Baby, be nice, our various mentors, examples— Ahem! and guides will be with us in a minute.

Baby. I say, Johnny, you are a very naughty boy.

Johnny. Of course, sweetheart, I have no encouragement to be otherwise.

Baby. Oh! Johnny, with Miss Palmerston and her meenister, as Jeanette calls him? Why, Johnny, you are not susceptible to a good example. I shall get the meenister to talk to you. He will do you a lot of good.

Johnny. You don't believe in the meenister?

Baby. He is awfully good looking, and Jeanette is awfully polite to him. And as for his poor unhappy wife—

Johnny. (With interest.) Is she unhappy?

Baby. Why, Johnny, how can she be anything but unhappy with those clothes? I could not live a minute with them on.

Johnny. You sweet thing, kiss me!

Baby. I won't! Just think how I would look with them on.

Johnny. Better than nothing!

Baby. Why, Johnny, I will tell my mamma.

Johnny. You will?

Baby. I will. And she will tell the prince, he'll tell his grandmother, of course! *(They both laugh.)* But kiss me, I'm ready.

Johnny. I'm not, I am afraid of the meenister. So there!

Baby. I think you are just horrid. I like Miss Palmerston. She is really good. I'd like to be rich enough to have a chaplain always about me.

Johnny. If he were good looking, you mean!

Baby. Well. *(Thoughtfully.)* He would have to dress better.

Johnny. And not have a wife!

Baby. Why, Johnny, what horrid ideas you do have! I'll tell mamma and she will tell the prince and he—

Johnny. I don't care a hang for the prince.

Baby. Oh! Johnny.

Johnny. I don't care a hang for anybody but you.

Baby. Not Miss Palmerston and all her money?

Johnny. Hang Miss Palmerston! Tanguay is going to have her. Lady Mary said so.

Baby. Did she? I thought I heard mamma say Lord Nevers was to have her.

Johnny. A big lot. What would your mamma do?

Baby. What do you mean, Johnny? Mamma doesn't have to have Lord Nevers.

Johnny. (*Drily.*) I thought she did.

Baby. Oh! no, he's just a friend. Just like the prince.

Johnny. It must be very nice to have friends.

Baby. It is, very. (*Innocently.*) You know Mr. Bampton is a great friend of mine.

Johnny. What? (*Savagely.*)

Baby. Why, Johnny, how you do burst out! Please don't. Mamma wouldn't like it. Her nerves are very sensitive.

Johnny. Oh! are they?

Baby. (*Simply.*) Yes, they are.

Johnny. I think I will marry Miss Palmerston myself. I must have money!

Baby. (*Indifferently.*) And she is so rich.

Johnny. And you would not care?

Baby. Of course not; not if you always love me, Johnny.

Johnny. I always shall; but I say, Tanguay has got the inside track.

Baby. Why so?

Johnny. Because he is so good. Why, do you know, he doesn't even say damn?

Baby. You don't say! How lonely he must feel at times.

Johnny. I don't know, he talks a lot with your meenister.

Baby. Oh! that is to stand well with the heiress.

Johnny. He's crafty.

Baby. (*Nonchalantly.*) I really wonder who will get her and the millions? Oh! Johnny dear, wouldn't it be nice if we just had the millions, then mamma would approve, and you could make faces at Lady Mary, and we could be so happy.

Johnny. (*Teasing.*) You forget all about old Bampton.

Baby. Now, Johnny dear, you are the only one I ever loved, and the only one I shall ever love. Never mind the

Bamptons and so forth—— and so forth. Just love me. There now, give me a good kiss. (*He does, as LADY MARY and MRS. BAMPTON enter.*)

Lady Mary. (*Who hears a queer sound.*) My dear, what was that?

Baby. Only a slap I gave Johnny. He is so forward. Don't you think, Mrs. Bampton, English young men are perfectly horrid? (*JOHNNY steals a piece of cake and grins. BABY joins him in the corner.*)

Lady Mary. As I was saying, Mrs. Bampton, society is simply at a standstill, unless you have money. Really, I suppose you never knew what poverty was?

Mrs. Bampton. (*With a certain adoration.*) Really, Lady Mary, how can you speak that way? You know you are rolling in wealth!

Lady Mary. Yes, I have a little. But just between you and me, I like you, Mrs. Bampton, you are so frank and openhearted, Johnson really is very close. With all his money, too! But as I was saying, now what was I saying? Oh! I know, we were so poor. If you could know how I used to shiver at the castle. Oh! it is all very well to live in a real old castle, as you Americans put it, but what is history, coats of arms and William the Conqueror got to do with keeping warm, and having enough to eat? I have had enough of aristocratic poverty! A good square meal, as you Americans say, cooked by a French chef, of course, and a simple, storm-proof cottage, with some of your good American heating, is not at all bad.

Mrs. Bampton. Like Johnson Court, you mean, with three hundred and fifty rooms!

Lady Mary. Well, Johnson Court is like an hotel, but a first rate hotel is not at all bad.

Mrs. Bampton. I think Clampton pretty nice. I wish I had the money to own it. I do so envy Miss Palmerston.

Lady Mary. (*With deep interest.*) Where did she get her money?

Mrs. Bampton. I really don't know. She came to me with the very best letters. Really I was quite pleased that the people who wrote them even remembered me.

Lady Mary. I am greatly surprised to hear you speak that way. There can be no one in America who would seem to be doing you a favor, in your present position with us, by introducing a lady. To be sure Miss Palmerston is very brilliant, and very beautiful, and is certainly very rich, very rich indeed. Otherwise she could never have taken Clampton for a long lease. Why, they say the upkeep is something awful. It is no wonder the dear duke quite went to pieces, even if he did take to aviation.

Mrs. Bampton. The letters did not speak of her wealth. Indeed the people who are her friends in New York do not at all care for money.

Lady Mary. How very odd, how very odd!

Mrs. Bampton. It does seem odd in this day, I must confess. Still, in America there is so much money, and money grows so——

Lady Mary. (*Enthusiastically.*) And money grows so——

Mrs. Bampton. Yes, it grows, and grows——

Lady Mary. (*Making a motion with her hands.*) It grows and grows——

Mrs. Bampton. That oftentimes a large fortune is quite overlooked.

Lady Mary. How careless! (*Enter HOUGHTON.*) Oh! see him! I cannot understand why he is here.

Mrs. Bampton. Quite natural. Our American girls are very religious, and very devoted to their friends.

Lady Mary. (*Puzzled.*) When they have no money?

Mrs. Bampton. Oh! yes, indeed! But Miss Palmerston is really very simple and straightforward.

Lady Mary. Indeed! She seems to me rather sarcastic and cutting.

Mrs. Bampton. Oh! you must not mind that. I really think she is quite eprise with your brother.

Lady Mary. Do you? I hope so! I don't know what he will do if she isn't. I have tried to marry him off a dozen times, but he says the girl is too fat, or too lean, or he hates vulgar wealth, or some other wretched thing. Just as though one should think of such things when one is marrying! Where would I be if I had such old-fashioned notions? Well, I will tell you this, if he does not marry

her I shall just let him go. I have done enough for my family!

Mrs. Bampton. I fancy Lord Nevers would be heart broken.

Lady Mary. He couldn't be heartbroken so long as that Courtenay woman lasts. It is perfectly disgraceful how they act. And the prince, too, he must be blind.

Mrs. Bampton. (*Confidingly.*) I never understood quite about the prince.

Lady Mary. Well, you needn't. If you want to get on the less you understand some things the better. Only that Courtenay woman will never get the prize for Nevers so long as I live and breathe. (*Clinches her hands as she rises to greet MISS PALMERSTON, who enters.*) We are so glad you were not late. Where have you been?

Miss Palmerston. Just roaming around with Mr. Houghton. He wanted to see the place. It is really so beautiful.

Lady Mary. Very grand, very grand indeed. He was one of our greatest dukes. So sad, so sad! Now, what was I saying?

Miss Palmerston. Something about the place.

Lady Mary. Oh! yes, so grand. It would be so nice if you owned it. I am sure the duke would sell it.

Miss Palmerston. (*Embarrassed.*) Indeed there is some talk of its being bought, I believe.

Lady Mary. To be sure! Holy Lucre is after it, I hear. How nice if he gets it! But you have it on a long lease?

Miss Palmerston. (*Still embarrassed.*) In a way, in case it is not sold.

Lady Mary. Oh! indeed. Now, what was I saying? (*HOUGHTON comes up.*) You must have enjoyed your walk? It must be very nice for you to see such a place?

Houghton. (*Looking at Annette with significance.*) Very nice indeed, very nice indeed!

Lady Mary. (*Raising her lorgnette and staring.*) Now what was I going to say?

Houghton. (*Turning away, and aside.*) Heaven only knows!

Miss Palmerston. You were going to say it is a very fine place. It was so nice of the duke to happen to lose his money at this time.

Lady Mary. Exactly. Now where is Tanguay? He is never around when one wants him.

Annette. Alas! it is always so in life. Why should I be an old maid when there are so many nice men in the world?

Lady Mary. (*Eagerly and at once reverting to her favorite topic.*) To be sure. And Tanguay is so foolish! I assure you in some things he quite lacks brains.

Annette. (*Teasing.*) Oh! does he? It is fortunate he is not here just now. He would never do.

Lady Mary. (*Who is very literal.*) Please don't say that, Miss Palmerston. All nice men lack brains. Now, what was I going to say? All nice men never know how to take care of themselves.

Annette. And that is why we women have such a great responsibility, is it not?

Lady Mary. (*Who is dense.*) To be sure. If I had not looked after Mr. Johnson, why, now what was I going to say? Why, someone else would. I quite dread to think of it, and the castle was so cold. I quite shiver when I think of it.

Annette. That is why I introduced a heating plant here. I have always heard that English aristocracy was so cold.

Lady Mary. Awfully! when we are at home! (*Mrs. Bampton comes up.*)

Mrs. Bampton. Oh! Miss Palmerston, is it true that you have begun negotiations for the purchase of Clampton?

Annette. Not exactly! I did enquire the price. I ordered some improvements, it is true, but then they are not very expensive.

Lady Mary. But you put in bath rooms and heating, and I don't know what else.

Annette. (*Somewhat embarrassed.*) I believe they were ordered. The place would be quite uninhabitable without something done.

Lady Mary. But the expense! though, if money grows and grows, as they say it does in your blessed country, the expense is nothing.

Annette. (Incautiously, and with a look at Houghton.) That depends who pays the bills.

Lady Mary and Mrs. Bampton. (Together.) Oh, indeed. (*LADY MARY puts up her glass, and MRS. BAMPTON looks puzzled.*)

Houghton. It is fortunate it has been all arranged. Miss Palmerston is a very clever business woman. All Americans seem to possess the ability.

Lady Mary. (Staring through her glass.) I suppose it is only women who have the gift. Men do not always seem so fortunate.

Houghton. (Meekly.) Some men have other, and let us hope, higher thoughts.

Lady Mary. Indeed, that does very well for the cloth, Mr. Houghton, but other people must live. For the clergy, as their minds are set on spiritual things, it does not much matter if they live or not. Now does it, Mrs. Bampton? (*Turning away.*)

Annette. You have a specimen of the real English aristocrat!

Houghton. Don't say that! Now, Tanguay does not strike me at all as being that way. I think he is a fine fellow.

Annette. He is her brother. They say certain traits run in certain families. The worst thing about him is his sister.

Houghton. But do you know, I have often noticed the same families have members of exactly opposite types. I shall continue to believe in him until I have certain proof that he is not what I think him.

Annette. (Clasping her hands.) I do wish you were right!

Houghton. My dear Annette, you surprise me! I did not think you had such an interest in him.

Annette. (Hastily.) I did not say I had. But I like him, and yet how can I think him anything but a mere fortune hunter?

Houghton. Well, you have yourself to blame, or rather me! I think it is great fun, so will you. You are no longer a silly school girl.

Annette. Thank you, I am not sure I was ever one!

Houghton. We all have our veal-like days. You are quite safe. I would not have exposed you to temptation had I thought that you would have yielded. I am quite sure I can trust you.

Annette. Are you quite sure? Perhaps, old friend, you are right, but I should say never trust a woman's heart.

Houghton. Te—— te ta——te ta. It would be too funny if I started a romance. I have always been dying to have one myself, and now to be right in the midst of something exciting really rouses my ambition. I admit we have enough villains.

Annette. That is all very well for you, but I am getting sorry that I ever undertook this.

Houghton. I don't see why you should be, you certainly have the chance of your life to study human nature.

Annette. I don't think I like human nature, it gets to be fearfully tiresome.

Houghton. It is only for a short time. I am having a fine time. I was never snubbed so in my life. (*The tea is brought in by footmen, and DUMBELL superintends gravely. The guests group themselves according to fancy. ANNETTE at the table.*)

Annette. Pray, make yourself useful. (*To Houghton.*) (*He hands a cup of tea to LADY MARY, she puts up her glass and surveys him.*)

Lady Mary. Ah! how well you fulfill your calling! It is to serve, is it not? Delicious tea we have here, Mrs. Bampton. Do you have as good in America?

Mrs. Bampton. I really have forgotten! but we always have sweet cream, and not skimmed milk.

Lady Mary. Oh! yes, how nice, how very nice! Well, I do think sweet cream is better than sour milk. I do assure you, Mrs. Bampton, at Tanguay Castle one was glad to get even sour milk. It is so dreadful to be poor, so very dreadful! Now what was I going to say?

Houghton. I presume, Lady Mary, you were going to say it must be nice for a poor minister to have sweet cream instead of sour milk!

Lady Mary. Quite so, quite so. (*Enter MRS. COURTENAY, very much dressed and painted.*) There comes that Courtenay

woman! What unlimited brass! And all because of the prince.

Mrs. Bampton. (Pleadingly.) Do explain the prince.

Lady Mary. (Raising her glass.) Really, Mrs. Bampton, you might as well ask me to explain the reason of the universe. I suppose it is just a question of self-preservation. At any rate she looks well preserved. Now doesn't she? *(Much pleased with her little joke.)*

Annette. You are just in time!

Mrs. Courtenay. My dear, I can never miss my cup of tea. Any meal but this. Really I dread the thought of hearty food. *(HOUGHTON passes her a cup of tea. She stares at him and takes it without speaking.)* I do wonder where the men are, dear Miss Palmerston?

Houghton. (With mischief.) You adhere to the saying men, women and priests.

Mrs. Courtenay. (Contemptuously.) Certainly, why not?

Houghton. (With a smile.) You evidently care very little about your soul.

Mrs. Courtenay. My soul! Indeed I am not sure I have one. A soul is an unknown possibility. I prefer something thoroughly well understood.

Houghton. (Meekly.) Money?

Mrs. Courtenay. Yes, if you choose to put it in that vulgar way. I do trust, Miss Palmerston, you are not going to compel us to listen to sermons.

Annette. (Much amused.) Oh! no, none of us like medicine. The more we need it the more we dread it, is it not so?

Mrs. Courtenay. Humph! Perhaps you are right, I always notice I can listen to a sermon much more contentedly when my bills have all been paid. I suppose that is why you have a chaplain. No amount of preaching could disturb you.

Annette. Are debts the only sins you encounter?

Mrs. Courtenay. Just about all, so far as I can think.

Annette. Then I should think you might be happy. *(TANGUAY enters.)* Mrs. Courtenay was saying she had no sins but debts.

Tanguay. Can't say if I am so fortunate! Happily I have no debts. They are a great mistake. They must worry

a fellow a lot. As for sins, I have my share. A fellow would be deucedly uninteresting without them.

Annette. Is that your only claim to interest?

Tanguay. Pretty nearly, any chap can have those. It is for that reason I don't count for much.

Mrs. Courtenay. How you ever get on without debts passes my comprehension.

Tanguay. I repress myself.

Mrs. Courtenay. But that is such a nuisance.

Tanguay. Oh! I don't know, one can be happy without a lot of expenses.

Mrs. Courtenay. Yes, but one must have the bare necessities of life.

Tanguay. (*Looking her over.*) To be sure! (*He and ANNETTE exchange glances.*)

Mrs. Courtenay. Come now, Tanguay, you are posing.

Tanguay. No, I am not!

Mrs. Courtenay. Well, you are not much like your sister.

Tanguay. Bless her heart, I am so glad I am not. Mary must have money. It is like air to her.

Annette. (*Aside.*) I wonder if he is posing? He certainly does not look it.

Tanguay. I say, Mrs. Courtenay, you must not judge all of us fellows by Nevers. Some of us can take a slow pace.

Mrs. Courtenay. (*Viciously.*) I don't. Just why you speak of him now I don't see. (*Moving about.*)

Tanguay. (*With a smile.*) Nor I.

Annette. You don't like Lord Nevers?

Tanguay. No, do you? (*With interest.*)

Annette. Oh! I? How can I tell? He is very polite, he seems quite the thing. I understand he is accepted everywhere. Mrs. Bampton said it would be quite right to ask him if I asked Mrs. Courtenay. I did not quite understand what she meant.

Tanguay. (*Looking at ANNETTE with attention, then away.*) You did not? Don't seek to understand our ways. Money does not seem to have spoiled you and— don't let it! Money has been the curse of England. The lack of it is the curse to-day. The English aristocracy has been educated

to a plane of living which it is becoming more and more difficult to maintain. It is misery, misery, I assure you!

Annette. So far as I can see it appears an agreeable misery.

Tanguay. To you, yes. You see the glitter, the smiles, the cordiality, the bloom, but you do not see the tinsel, the bitterness, the hatred, selfishness that is so deftly hidden. You do not see a beautiful flower doctored, manipulated, poisoned to present a base and meretricious appearance. *(They both glance at Mrs. Courtenay.)* But I will say no more. At least I wish you to believe us, that is—some of us—are well bred.

Annette. I do not quite understand you.

Tanguay. It is not well bred for me to criticise your guests to their hostess.

Annette. (Aside.) Is this man posing, I wonder? *(To Tanguay.)* Please do take some more tea.

Tanguay. Thank you, I will, you make it just right. May I ask if it is acquired skill or personality?

Annette. Which would you prefer it to be?

Tanguay. Hesitating, then suddenly.) Personality.

Annette. You prefer something I cannot help rather than something that shows ability.

Tanguay. (Desperately.) Yes, in you.

Annette. In me? *(Stammering.)* I don't quite understand.

Tanguay. (Confused.) Don't try.

Annette. But I am a woman, I am curious.

Tanguay. Yes, and curiosity has destroyed many a person's happiness.

Annette. Your happiness or mine?

Tanguay. It might be mine.

Annette. If you continue this way you will be quite too fascinating.

Tanguay. How?

Annette. First you admit you are a sinner, then you give me an uncertain compliment and—

Tanguay. And?

Annette. (Confused.) I forgot. I will not add further to your fascinations.

Tanguay. (Humbly.) Please do!

Annette. (Looking at him carefully.) Other women can do that better than I can.

Tanguay. Perhaps not—— to my taste.

Annette. Well, I shall not tell you. Perhaps Mrs. Courtenay will. At any rate I will venture this much, if she can be as frank with Lord Nevers she ought to be equally frank with you. (*Turning to MRS. BAMPTON, who sits down beside her.*)

Tanguay. (Rising, and aside.) What in the deuce is she driving at?

Mrs. Bampton. (Whispering.) Isn't he nice? I do so admire him. And I will take a little more tea.

Annette. Are Englishmen ever sincere?

Mrs. Bampton. (Nearly dropping her cup.) My dear!

Annette. Are Englishmen ever sincere when talking to a woman?

Mrs. Bampton. Now, my dear, is a man ever sincere except when he is dealing in stocks or talking horse?

Annette. I don't know that he is, now that I think of it. Perhaps that is why I never married.

Mrs. Bampton. Oh! is that it? I have wondered so much.

Annette. You have? I did not suppose I was a matter of such great interest.

Mrs. Bampton. Oh! but you are, you know. Why, with all of your advantages—— there, but I will not talk any more.

Annette. Don't, or you will make me think you are no more sincere than the men.

Mrs. Bampton. He has been talking to you?

Annette. Why, yes, as you just saw.

Mrs. Bampton. (Eagerly.) What did he say?

Annette. Now come, Mrs. Bampton, I surely could not tell you, you know. But he did not propose!

Mrs. Bampton. (Disappointed.) Didn't he?

Annette. No, he didn't. Do you suppose he will?

Mrs. Bampton. Of course.

Annette. I suppose so, they all do. I have hardly looked at a man twice that he did not propose. If Lord Tanguay did not propose I would marry him.

Mrs. Bampton. But, my dear, how could you?

Annette. Propose myself!

Mrs. Bampton. (*Struck by a new thought.*) Yes, why shouldn't you? In your position it would be quite proper. I am afraid, though, he will make the mistake of doing it himself. (*Runs off.* *MRS. HOUGHTON enters and takes a seat to one side. ANNETTE perceives her and motions her to have a cup of tea.*)

Annette. Don't sit away off there!

Mrs. Houghton. Why not, I don't seem to be wanted anywhere else. (*Enter MR. BAMPTON. He takes no notice of anyone and soliloquises.*)

Bampton. Deuced queer! The old lady in her element. Launched a new heiress. The supply will give out in the States. Married one myself. It's better'n work, by gad! I find it is very undignified to work, very— very, indeed. Now she's got her heiress launched, got the Courtenay and all, swell up gang, got a suitable parti, got it all en train, and now the fun begins— and what fun! Let me see how many of these bloomin' heiresses has she landed already on the long suffering, but still patient British public?

Annette. (*Looking up.*) Please have some tea, Mr. Bampton.

Bampton. Tea, tea, have some tea— yes, that is it. It is tea and toast, and toast and tea, and another heiress is gone, gone right to the bosom of the British public.

Annette. (*Laughing.*) As lambs to the slaughter.

Bampton. (*Waking up.*) Eh— eh, as lambs to the slaughter? Now, my dear Miss Palmerston, my wife hasn't been slaughtered yet. I'm to be the victim when the time comes. In fact I am nearly slaughtered now, thank you! (*Takes tea and turns away. NEVERS enters.*) Slaughter, well slaughter isn't so very bad when you would otherwise die of starvation. No, it would be rather nice for the chap who gets Clampton.

Nevers. The chap who gets Clampton! Your mind travels far and fast, Bampton. The duke hasn't shed it yet.

Bampton. He is as good as out of it, Nevers, as good as out of it.

Nevers. As good as out of it? You take some stock in this story that Miss Palmerston has bought the place?

Bampton. Yes, why not? She has a tremendous lot of money, why shouldn't she buy it?

Nevers. No reason whatever, if she really has the money. But there is a rumour that Holy Lucre is after the place.

Bampton. (*Surprised.*) Holy Lucre! you mean the Marquis of San Lucar?

Nevers. Yes, he would be a formidable rival, even Miss Palmerston could not outbid him.

Bampton. But San Lucar is a Spaniard.

Nevers. No, he is an American.

Bampton. You surprise me, an American, from South America?

Nevers. No, from North America. He is from the States.

Bampton. You don't say? Tell me about him.

Nevers. Filthy Lucre, as some are pleased to call him, was a poor man in the States, who learned one day a long forgotten uncle had died in the Argentine leaving him a fortune quite beyond belief in size. With this fortune went the title of San Lucar, given by the Brazilian Emperor, and confirmed by the King of Portugal. He seems an extraordinary character, very eccentric, and, when he likes, exceedingly generous with his wealth. So far very little is known about him. For he appears little in public, but when he does, surrounded by so much magnificence as to quite take one's breath away—in short, another Monte Cristo.

Bampton. I see, just a vulgar rich.

Nevers. Quite the contrary, not at all vulgar, very polished in his manner—indeed quite fascinating.

Bampton. But ignorant, I know.

Nevers. Neither vulgar nor ignorant. A cultivated, highly educated, accomplished gentleman.

Bampton. And so poor—

Nevers. Well, I am poor myself, so that does not count. But here is the rub. I have means of knowing this Miss Palmerston is not quite what she seems.

Bampton. (*Astonished.*) Not quite what she seems!

Nevers. No, there is reason to believe that some one is paying her bills.

Bampton. Paying her bills! Are you sure?

Nevers. Pretty sure.

Bampton. Not paying her bills?

Nevers. Well, don't mind that, I am not paying mine.

Bampton. But the old lady won't like that. I must get her out of here right away.

Nevers. Oh! don't be in so much of a hurry. You needn't go until I do. Besides, you are not paying your bills either.

Bampton. (*Aghast.*) Not paying—— my bills, why—— why——

Nevers. The whole world knows your wife is doing it. So don't be squeamish.

Bampton. But who is paying her bills?

Nevers. How do I know? What I want to know is, if she is able to pay her own and mine too. There is reason in my madness. (*Turns to MRS. COURTENAY.*)

Bampton. (*Solo.*) I knew there was something up. There always is where I go talking to myself. Strange what an effect I have on things. Or is it that things have an effect on me? Why, Baby! (*Who comes up*) where have you been all this time?

Baby. Just scolding Johnny. He is so naughty, so naughty. I can't do anything with him.

Bampton. (*Fatherly.*) You poor child. You do have such a time. I really feel for you greatly.

Baby. Yes, do feel a lot, and do it now while Johnny is looking. Horrid boy, I don't like boys.

Bampton. (*Pleased.*) Great big men—— men like——

Baby. (*Innocently.*) Men like you. Yes, that's it. Men who are not always naughty. Now come over here and bring me a cup of tea. Naughty Johnny spoiled mine by putting too much sugar in it. (*They retire to the side. ANNETTE gets up from the table and TANGUAY comes to meet her. The others gradually disappear.*)

Tanguay. You are not going? Oh! not so soon.

Annette. Is it soon?

Tanguay. Why, it is altogether too soon. Yet I don't know, perhaps not.

Annette. And yet not too soon. Really, you gave my curiosity a severe strain just now. More and it will break. Now why not too soon?

Tanguay. Oh! I don't know. (*Hesitating.*) It is never too soon to go away if one is about to do a foolish thing.

Annette. (*Laughing, and sitting down. The rest have disappeared.*) I am quite sure nothing will move me now, until the first bell rings. You see me fixed. You might as well accept your fate. I shall probe your soul to the bottom. (*She motions him to a seat.*)

Tanguay. (*Aside.*) What does she mean? She can't intend to lead me on just to throw me over. She must know I can't marry her. You are too good. A woman's curiosity must be handled with care. I appreciate the delicacy and the danger of the task.

Annette. Mine is great, I assure you. (*Aside.*) I am dying to see how he will act.

Tanguay. I fancy it must be to come among us knowing us so little, encountering the risks you do——

Annette. The risks! I do not quite understand. You persist in whetting my curiosity. The risks——

Tanguay. Yes, risks. You come here a young girl——

Annette. (*Sadly.*) Not quite so young.

Tanguay. Inexperienced——

Annette. Not quite so much as you think.

Tanguay. At any rate with a feeling of security——

Annette. Yes, that is true. But I am yet to see the danger.

Tanguay. You come to a people that is not your people——

Annette. I thought we were cousins.

Tanguay. Yes, but even cousins may be strangers.

Annette. But even strangers may be gentlemen.

Tanguay. True, but ideas of gentlemen may vary greatly. Your standard and your idea of a gentleman may not be ours.

Annette. Please explain.

Tanguay. (Disquieted.) Why, for instance, take the matter of marriage. With you I believe a woman never marries unless she can love the man——

Annette. That is hardly true, but go on.

Tanguay. While here it is quite different. Among us marriages are arranged. Caring for each other weighs but little. Other things count more. Money occupies a most prominent place—— and——

Annette. (Aside.) A most extraordinary way of proposing. And why should it not?

Tanguay. True, it is a most necessary thing to keep up appearances.

Annette. I quite agree with you.

Tanguay. It is quite possible for a man to marry wealth, if he can find a woman foolish enough to take him.

Annette. (Encouragingly.) There have been such fools.

Tanguay. And there are likely to be a great many more.

Annette. (Astonished and aside.) Really this is most extraordinary.

Tanguay. You are placed now in an atmosphere of pure greed. You probably do not perceive it.

Annette. Outside of the servants, I had not noticed it.

Tanguay. You see English society at its best. Please realize that.

Annette. (Much amused.) Is this a lecture or a warning?

Tanguay. Please, Miss Palmerston, *(Rising)* do not speak that way. I know I am fit for your scorn. I know I am in a bad light. I know I can seem to you nothing but what my sister would have me appear. I know well your sarcasm and brilliant wit, but do not pour out on me your contempt. I do not deserve it, I do not. Believe me, will you not, that I am a gentleman, and with God's help I will remain one. It is my poverty which puts me in this position. It is that wretched thing called family that makes me act like the rest. Act as though there was nothing in the world but pretense and a mad rush after gold. Please do think that there can be one Englishman, yes, an English nobleman, who can be a man, in the true English sense.

Annette. (Much moved.) I never thought you were—— any—— else.

Tanguay. Oh! you did, I saw it in your face, that face, that sweet face, (*She starts*) distorted by a sneer, and I was the cause of it. Don't fear me, I may be a fortune hunter, I may be obliged to be one, but I will not have you think that of me.

Annette. Why not have me think so if you are so?

Tanguay. My God! I am not. If you knew how I have detested my position, how I have longed to work, yes, work with these unfit hands to earn an honest living, and leave the miserable thing called rank, a rank without honor, without dignity, without words. You are right in making the mistake, I was wrong to come here. I know it now, I knew it then. I have stayed too long, too long by far, if I have earned your contempt.

Annette. (*Hastily.*) You have not.

Tanguay. There is only one thing to do, I must do it. But I want you to consider what I have said and do me the justice. It is no small matter for an honest man to have the approval and respect of a noble woman. (*The bell rings, they rise.*) Forgive me if I have been foolish, but it has hurt so to think that you might despise me.

Annette. (*Much moved.*) I shall never despise you. (*Giving her hand, and an intense look. TANGUAY goes out.*) No, I shall never despise the only man I ever loved.

CURTAIN.



ACT II.

SCENE—*Library, same evening. Enter TANGUAY. Takes out a cigar and lights it moodily. Moves around and knocks things over.*

Tanguay. Hang it. (Pauses and smokes vigorously.) Hang it! (Sits down carelessly and looks dejected.) I am sure she despises me. I made an ass of myself, as I usually do. Heavens, Tanguay, why can't you ever learn sense, and not go off like a rocket every time you happen to see a pretty girl? *(Smokes still harder.)* I have read somewhere about phlegmatic Englishmen, but, by gad, I never saw any. That is, any that could stay so for very long. What a set of bottled up, pressed down, bubbling-over hypocrites we are to be sure. We are not only hypocrites to the Almighty, but to ourselves also. Heavens what a fool I have made of myself! I do so wish I had learned to swear. Coaxed by that wretched sister of mine to come here, she knows I hate vulgarity, money and vulgarity go together, I come to find the finest woman I ever knew enshrined in her money like a saint in an Italian halo, and as unapproachable as a madonna. I am expected to act the hypocrite, to smirk, to wheedle, to dangle that miserable earl's coronet—mine is made of tin—before her, and ask her to take down her magnificent halo of gold, and put on a shabby tin affair made to please the vulgar London mob. How like a fool I look in it, and how like a fool I am with it. Then to complete the horrid affair I must go and make a scene and act like a schoolboy of sixteen, only to have her first jeer at me and then be so kind as to pity me. I know it! *(Pause.)* I will swear—damn— She actually pitied me— No, she didn't, she laughed at me. *(He walks about impatiently.) (Pauses.)* Damn— I have simply got to go— and I have got to say good-bye. I can't do it before those people, not before that beastly Nevers— *(He stops and thinks.)* Nevers— he will think I have proposed and been refused. Nice situation, isn't it? I'll stay— *(Walks around some*

more.) No, I can't. I simply can't. I must go, and I must say good-bye, and I must say it to her alone. (*He rings, DUMBELL enters.*) Oh! Dumbell, I shall be leaving in the morning.

Dumbell. Yes, my lord.

Tanguay. By the eight ten. (*MONTE enters and stops.*)

Dumbell. Yes, my lord.

Tanguay. (*Seeing MONTE.*) You here.

Monte. I was looking for Lord Nevers, my lord.

Tanguay. Stay a moment, I have a word to say. (*To DUMBELL.*) Ask Miss Palmerston if I may speak with her a moment. I wish to see her alone. (*MONTE starts.*)

Dumbell. Yes, my lord, is that all?

Tanguay. It is, you may go. (*DUMBELL exits.*) Now just why did you happen in?

Monte. My lord!

Tanguay. What reason had you to suppose Lord Nevers was in the library?

Monte. (*Stammering.*) I could not find him anywhere else. He might have been reading.

Tanguay. You know he never reads. By the way, I know all about you.

Monte. (*Startled.*) You know all about me?

Tanguay. Yes. You are the secret agent of Dunawar's private detective agency. You do the valet act, the confidential servant act, and you do it well. What the devil you are here for I don't know, but I won't have you spying after me, do you hear? Now go! (*MONTE bows and departs.*) That devil of a Nevers! Go and leave Miss Palmerston in the hands of the slickest set of rogues London can produce? I won't— yes, I will. It is none of my business— hang it, now I have got to go— I have got to go. I have asked Miss Palmerston here to say good-bye. What could I say if I did not say good-bye? Heavens, Tanguay, you are a fool. (*JEANETTE enters, and starts as she sees TANGUAY.*) Well, what do you want?

Jeanette. (*Confused.*) I was looking for Mr. Monte, Lord Nevers' valet.

Tanguay. (*Astonished.*) Looking for Lord Nevers' valet.

Jeanette. Yes. (*Stammering.*) I had a message for—— for——

Tanguay. For whom? (*Sharply.*)

Jeanette. For Lord Nevers.

Tanguay. And why did you come to the library to see Lord Nevers' valet?

Jeanette. Someone told me he was here.

Tanguay. That will do. (*Exit JEANETTE.*) So she had a message for Nevers' valet to give to him? What in thunder is going on? I find an expert detective in the house and this girl evidently having some understanding with him. So Miss Palmerston sends notes to Nevers—— I wonder why? They see each other as often, and where they like. Nevers is a rascal. Can she ever be his dupe? That Courtenay woman here too. In spite of her position, in spite of the prince, she is not the woman for Miss Palmerston to receive. The poor girl surely needs a protector. I suppose she thinks with Mary here, and her friend, Mrs. Bampton, she is well protected. But is she? (*Enter ANNETTE.*)

Tanguay. Oh! I am so sorry to trouble you.

Annette. It is no trouble, I assure you. Please sit down. (*He sits.*)

Tanguay. (*Hesitating.*) I only wanted to see you a moment. It would have been rude not to.

Annette. Rude, why rude?

Tanguay. (*Still hesitating.*) Well—— you see I am leaving in the morning.

Annette. Leaving in the morning!

Tanguay. Yes, I must go, and—— as—— I take an early train I wanted to say good-bye. I could have written a note.

Annette. A note!

Tanguay. Yes, it would have been better, and then I needn't have disturbed you.

Annette. It would have been better——

Tanguay. Yes, it would have been much easier——

Annette. (*Hurt.*) Easier?

Tanguay. You needn't have——

Annette. (Pausing.) I am afraid, Lord Tanguay, I do not quite understand you. I had no idea you thought of leaving so soon. Why, you have been here only a few days. I thought you were to remain a couple of weeks.

Tanguay. Well, yes, I did expect to stay a while, but——

Annette. But——

Tanguay. Things have happened—— and I find I must go in the morning.

Annette. You have business——

Tanguay. No.

Annette. You do not like it here.

Tanguay. Oh! yes, I do, I like it very much.

Annette. You are bored. Perhaps you do not find our company very entertaining.

Tanguay. Very much so indeed.

Annette. Then you have some business——

Tanguay. No, no. Oh! I mean yes—— that—— is——
(*Aside.*) I can't lie to her. (*He walks away and pauses, while she follows him with her eyes.*)

Annette. You don't like me. (*Slowly.*)

Tanguay. Miss Palmerston!

Annette. After what you said this afternoon I should not have thought that, but perhaps you did not mean it.

Tanguay. (Distressed.) How can you say that?

Annette. It was very nice to hear that some one wanted to be respected. I do myself. I thought a good deal of that during dinner. But when I looked at you it seemed a desire for respect and approval must be a very unhappy feeling.

Tanguay. It is when one is not sure of getting it.

Annette. And are you not sure of getting it?

Tanguay. Not from the source I want it from.

Annette. You should have more faith in people, and more faith in yourself.

Tanguay. How can I? I ask you how can I, placed as I am? Bound down by trammels not of my making, kept in by silly customs, placed in a vise as it were, how can I break through them and put myself on a plane with a man who can make a place in the world, and can make his life what he would wish it to be? You say I am free, strong, independent! I say I am not free. I am one of a class and

must do as that class demands, or become a pariah. It is not so easy to become a pariah in the eyes of those you love and know. How am I to know, if I burn my bridges behind me, that I shall gain the victory? If I fail I am utterly lost. It requires courage to do that, and I am not brave, not brave enough to throw myself into outer darkness without some chance of success. Ruined by a line of miserable ancestors, who thought more of themselves than of anything else, I am expected to retrieve my fortunes by marrying a woman for money. I won't! I will not debase myself to such a degree. My person is sacred to myself, and I will not make it a miserable means to gild a tin coronet. (*ANNETTE regards him with shining eyes.*) You don't know the sting of poverty, you know only the burden of superfluous wealth.

Annette. Are you quite sure?

Tanguay. Why should I not be sure? I am also sure you pity me. Thank you for that. Even that from you is something, but I won't be pitied. I am a man, and I will remain one. Good-bye, Miss Palmerston, and forgive me for making a scene and bothering you with my troubles.

Annette. Are you quite sure I pity you?

Tanguay. (*Startled.*) Sure—— I don't know, do you?

Annette. No, I do not.

Tanguay. And why not?

Annette. Because I see no reason to pity you.

Tanguay. You don't? You don't think I am good enough to be pitied.

Annette. (*Rising.*) No, I am proud of you.

Tanguay. Proud of me—— proud of me? You must be daft!

Annette. No, I am not daft. I am feeling quite right. Shake hands with me. I want to shake hands with a real man. It will be very refreshing, after the hands I have shaken lately. (*He gives her his hand in amazement.*) Now I want you to countermand your directions for leaving and finish your visit. (*She rings.*) I simply cannot spare you. I shall not allow myself to be deliberately robbed of my choicest guest. (*DUMBELL enters.*) Lord Tanguay will remain, Dumbell, please tell his man.

Dumbell. Very well, my leddy. (*Exit.*)

Tanguay. No, stay, I say, Dumbell— Oh! he's gone. Really I cannot stay, you don't understand.

Annette. Oh! yes, I do. I personally wish you to remain, now do.

Tanguay. (*Very much distressed.*) But, Miss Palmerston, you do not understand. Really I cannot remain. I must— oh! I must go.

Annette. (*Smiling.*) Business.

Tanguay. No— yes, why I simply can't.

Annette. (*Sitting down.*) I am deeply interested in this puzzle. I shall stay until my curiosity is gratified. Come now, Lord Tanguay, you will do that much for me.

Tanguay. (*Frightened.*) You put me in an awful position.

Annette. (*Sweetly.*) Do I? Just think of the position in which you put me.

Tanguay. (*Surprised.*) You? I don't see you are in any position.

Annette. Oh! you don't? Well, it seems to me if you suddenly flee you are giving me something to explain. You do not suppose my friends lack curiosity— or— even a touch of malice sometimes?

Tanguay. I don't understand.

Annette. Well, what reason am I to give Mrs. Bampton for instance why you left? I am in a way bound to make matters straight with her. These people are her friends, and if you suddenly disappear, these friends may conclude—

Tanguay. Conclude— well, they would conclude I went away.

Annette. Yes, why did you go away? There must have been a reason for this abrupt departure. What reason?

Tanguay. (*Hotly.*) It is none of their business.

Annette. I agree with you there, but they won't feel that way.

Tanguay. Let them feel as they like.

Annette. But how will I feel?

Tanguay. You? You don't care.

Annette. I do care. I care a great deal. I want to be treating my guests well, I do not want to have them think I could be unkind to one of their number.

Tanguay. But you haven't been.

Annette. But it will look so.

Tanguay. I'll be dashed if I see why.

Annette. (*Stily.*) What do you suppose Lord Nevers will think?

Tanguay. Lord Nevers! who cares a d— diamond what he thinks?

Annette. Well, I do! (*With spirit.*)

Tanguay. You do?

Annette. I most certainly do.

Tanguay. (*Thoroughly puzzled.*) I can't see at all.

Annette. (*Impatient.*) You can't see even with glasses on. Now tell, what would you think if Lord Nevers were to leave suddenly without any reason whatever?

Tanguay. (*Thinks.*) Why I— would think he had been— such— an unmitigated ass as to dare to ask for the honor of your hand and been refused.

Annette. Well, what then?

Tanguay. Oh! I see, but you haven't refused me.

Annette. I haven't had a chance.

Tanguay. (*Struck dumb.*) Miss Palmerston, you surely— I can't really quite get it through my thick head. You surely do not want me to make you an offer of marriage for the mere purpose of refusing me? Surely I am hard enough hit already without that.

Annette. (*Confused.*) How could you think such a thing? I said nothing of the sort. I said I did not wish you to leave Clampton.

Tanguay. But I told you I could not stay.

Annette. But that reason I have not heard. (*Mischievously.*)

Tanguay. And I can't tell! You don't want Nevers to feel too proud of himself. Do you like Lord Nevers? (*With a sudden interest.*)

Annette. I don't think you have a right to ask that question.

Tanguay. (*Jalously.*) I hate him.

Annette. Lord Nevers is my guest.

Tanguay. Yes, I know. Pardon me, but you must let me go.

Annette. Not until you have given me a good reason.

Tanguay. Spare me!

Annette. (*Smiling.*) Surely, Lord Tanguay, now that I have frankly shown you what your abrupt leaving would indicate, you could not want to put me in a false position.

Tanguay. You make it very hard for me, Miss Palmerston. (*He walks away.*)

Annette. (*Aside.*) I can't let him go. I can't without something. Just one little word.

Tanguay. (*Returning.*) I cannot say to you what I wish.

Annette. Why not?

Tanguay. Because you said it is not nice for you to hear things about your guests.

Annette. You wish to abuse Lord Nevers?

Tanguay. (*Jealously.*) You like him? Of course I would not abuse him.

Annette. How do you know I like him?

Tanguay. (*Rashly.*) You prefer him to me.

Annette. (*Severely.*) You have no right to say that. Indeed you go too far. You are both my guests. I have hardly had time to like or dislike either of you. People do not rush to such violent conclusions in this age. That belongs to the time when they really wore coronets. Now, I have never seen either you or Lord Nevers in yours, so I cannot judge. Are they really so very becoming? (*He notices the amusement in her voice and resents it.*)

Tanguay. I know I am a fool! Surely I prove it often enough.

Annette. I don't think anything of the sort, Lord Tanguay. But I must ask you to stay for my sake.

Tanguay. (*Looking at her curiously.*) For your sake? Just to spare your feelings—perhaps your pride.

Annette. (*Laughing.*) Hardly my pride. Perhaps it would be better to say your pride.

Tanguay. Oh! I have no pride.

Annette. (*Tauntingly.*) Just want to leave the field to the enemy?

Tanguay. (*Thinking.*) Hang it, not to Nevers—no. Oh! please let me go.

Annette. But what will the servants say?

Tanguay. Hang the servants!

Annette. We often wish to, but a misguided government forbids.

Tanguay. (*Bursting out.*) Miss Palmerston, don't you see you are driving me to desperation? Don't you see you are inflicting on me utter misery? Can't you learn that I cannot stand this much longer? Something will surely break. Oh! please do stop tormenting me this way.

Annette. (*Frightened, and rising.*) Tormenting you, Lord Tanguay? I have no thought of tormenting you. I—— I—— do not even wish to put one thing in the way of your happiness. I—— I——

Tanguay. (*Carried away by his love.*) You don't, not one thing?

Annette. (*Gasping.*) No—— not one thing.

Tanguay. You can't mean it—— (*She turns away.*) I see you do not mean it. You think you have hurt me and you are sorry. Are you sorry?

Annette. Sorry—— yes I am sorry. Yes—— sorry.

Tanguay. (*Bitterly.*) Pity, just pity. I knew it was pity.

Annette. Pity, no it isn't pity.

Tanguay. Not pity, then for heaven's sake what is it.

Annette. (*Trembling.*) I don't know.

Tanguay. You don't know?

Annette. (*Dropping on a couch and beginning to sob.*) No—— no. I don't know. (*Silence. TANGUAY gazes at her in bewilderment. She continues to sob, while he walks up and down.*)

Tanguay. (*Stammering.*) I am so sorry I hurt your feelings. I did not mean to do so. Please forgive me. (*ANNETTE tries to control herself.*) I am just a man—— (*Silence.*) I want to be a decent man. (*Silence.*) I—— I—— want to be a good man—— but, hang it, it is very hard work.

Annette. (*Drying her tears.*) Forgive me, Lord Tanguay, for being weak, but really it hurt to have you speak so.

Tanguay. I am so sorry, forgive me.

Annette. Of course I forgive you, but—— (*Catching her breath.*) you conclude too quickly that young women with money have no—— nerves.

Tanguay. Nerves?

Annette. Why—— why—— yes. Nerves! you men think we poor women, who have a little to live on, are just brazen jzebels. And we are not!

Tanguay. (*Aghast.*) I never thought anything of the kind.

Annette. I am quite sure you did, in fact I know it.

Tanguay. Miss Palmerston, you are unjust.

Annette. Yes, call me names if you like. I know I deserve it.

Tanguay. But, Miss Palmerston, I simply protest. I had no such intention. I only want to please you.

Annette. Then stay.

Tanguay. Do you want me to remain when you understand so well why I came, and also what my honor requires of me?

Annette. I want you to stay.

Tanguay. You want me to stay for your sake?

Annette. Yes, and also for your own. I do not want you to be put in a false light.

Tanguay. But if I stay I do put myself in a false light.

Annette. I don't see how.

Tanguay. Why I appear—— (*Hesitating.*) I appear to be seeking vulgar wealth, and seem to think you are so cheap a woman that you would be willing to sell yourself for a title.

Annette. You mean trade. Well I am not.

Tanguay. I know you are not. Do you not then see if I stay I am putting you in that position?

Annette. But I am accustomed to that. Everybody does that, one more does not count.

Tanguay. But that is not the point, at least with me.

Annette. Oh! you are not so unselfish then?

Tanguay. By no means.

Annette. (*Brightening up.*) Oh! then you are going to tell me?

Tanguay. (*Exasperated.*) Yes, I will tell you. You know I love you, and have made it quite plain enough. (*ANNETTE looks happy.*) You have been determined to make me say it, and now I hope you are satisfied.

Annette. (Troubled.) I don't know that I am.

Tanguay. I knew it, I knew it. You wished to complete the wreck. Well, I trust you will now let me go. For there is certainly no reason for me to remain.

Annette. But you have not been refused yet!

Tanguay. Miss Palmerston, do you wish so much to refuse me?

Annette. No, indeed, I have no wish of that nature.

Tanguay. But, then, what do you want?

Annette. (Rising.) Lord Tanguay, there is one thing I do not want, I do not want your tin coronet.

Tanguay. You affront me.

Annette. Far from it. Don't ask me what I want. It doesn't sound nice for a woman to say she wants a man, but if I ever do marry, which seems extremely unlikely, I do want a man. Lord Tanguay, you have proved yourself a man.

Tanguay. Miss Palmerston, I don't understand—— you don't mean you want me? *(Hopeful.)*

Annette. You are not the only man in the world.

Tanguay. (Downcast.) Yes, I know, yes, of course. Miss Palmerston, forgive me.

Annette. (Impatiently.) Lord Tanguay, you do me the honor to say you are in love with me. Frankly I am glad of it.

Tanguay. You are? *(Puzzled.)*

Annette. Yes, and I am proud of it. It will be one of my choicest memories. It will be something—— *(Aside.)* oh! he is hopeless; self-depreciation in a man is a mistake.

Tanguay. (Bitterly.) I shall be one of a family portrait gallery.

Annette. Oh! Lord Tanguay, did you ever love any other woman?

Tanguay. Never!

Annette. Well, I never loved any other man.

Tanguay. Annette!

Annette. (Hastily and in confusion.) But that is not saying I love you.

Tanguay. Oh! Annette, Annette! *(Seizing her hand.)* If you could care a little bit. Just a little bit for me.

Annette. Please let me go, oh! please.

Tanguay. I can't. Tell me, can't you ever love me just a little?

Annette. What is the use, you say you can never marry me.

Tanguay. Yes, I know, but don't let us think of that now. Will you try? I know I am nothing at all. Just a poor fool who thought——

Annette. Yes, just a nice one. (*They hear steps.*) Hush.

Tanguay. Just one word!

Annette. Oh! I cannot say now just a word. There is a reason. (*Enter NEVERS.*) There! (*She pushes him away just as NEVERS sees them.*)

Nevers. Oh! pardon me, I trust I am not interrupting you. (*With a faint sneer.*)

Annette. No, indeed. Lord Tanguay was saying good-bye. I am trying to get him to remain. (*The men glare at each other.*)

Nevers. I should not think you would find that very difficult.

Annette. But I do. (*Vivaciously.*) I do indeed. He is quite obstinate. (*NEVERS smiles viciously.*)

Nevers. Do stay, Tanguay, don't go just yet. Stay and have some fun.

Tanguay. (*Shaking his fist at NEVERS behind ANNETTE'S back.*) I don't know, but I will. Perhaps there will be more fun than you expect.

Annette. Oh! I am so glad, Lord Tanguay, thank you.

Tanguay. I will stay if you bid me. Now I will say good night.

Annette. Good night. (*TANGUAY exit.*) Well, Lord Nevers, I never dreamed men ever left the smoking room when they were once in it.

Nevers. Tanguay left, why not I? (*With meaning.*)

Annette. Oh! that was different. He was going away.

Nevers. Oh! so soon, why should he be going away so soon?

Annette. How can I know his reasons?

Nevers. He must have given some excuse.

Annette. And if he did, Lord Nevers, why should you be interested to know? (*With some surprise.*)

Nevers. I am not altogether sure I was interested, Miss Palmerston. In fact I was not. Tanguay is a good fellow. (*With a slight accent of pity, which ANNETTE notes and resents.*)

Annette. (*Warmly.*) Yes, a mighty good fellow. I like Lord Tanguay very much.

Nevers. Ah! that is lucky for him. (*Aside.*) Poor chap, got left, and she is sorry. But why don't you sit down, Miss Palmerston? (*She hesitates, and then sits.*)

Annette. Is it not getting late?

Nevers. Not for grown ups. We have sent Tanguay to bed, now we can sit up a while.

Annette. You seem to class me in the same antediluvian class with yourself, Lord Nevers.

Nevers. (*Laughing.*) Come now, that is a good joke. I suppose I do look a little old. Late nights do not keep away grey hairs. Now Tanguay, poor chap, in his lonely castle, goes to bed, I fancy, at nine.

Annette. (*Annoyed.*) I don't see any reason for bringing Lord Tanguay up all the time. He has gone to bed, let him sleep.

Nevers. (*Pleased.*) Yes, let him rest. We have other things to talk of, haven't we?

Annette. Have we, what?

Nevers. Well, I have. Perhaps I might interest you enough to think that you have.

Annette. (*Amused.*) Do please try.

Nevers. (*Flattered as she sits down.*) Yes, I will try. I may not succeed, but even the humblest may try, may they not? (*Looking at her tenderly. ANNETTE is silent.*) You are not interested, perhaps?

Annette. Oh! yes, I am. I was just waiting.

Nevers. Well, you come among us, Miss Palmerston, and find a new world. (*Somewhat patronizingly.*) I presume the States do not appear just the same in your eyes as they did.

Annette. Why not?

Nevers. Oh! here you have a civilization——

Annette. I think we are civilized in the States.

Nevers. I did not mean that. I meant you find here an older and riper——

Annette. You don't mean rotten?

Nevers. (*A little dashed.*) Oh! a more complete—— eh—— I mean something that has reached its ideal—— has accomplished all that, which you in the States are aiming for.

Annette. Yes, I know, I see. You think we are crude.

Nevers. Well, yes. I suppose I do think, as a nation perhaps, your people have not yet acquired all the polish, the refinement, the subtle something, say—— say—— well, something final, complete—— eh—— well, something like our society, our nobility.

Annette. No, I don't think we have. You don't mean we have got to the top, and are just ready to fall over the other side?

Nevers. No, I don't mean that, of course not. You don't have to fall off the top of a mountain when you have once got to the top.

Annette. No, but you have to climb down occasionally, when you want something to eat.

Nevers. Haw—— haw—— Poor Tanguay! I believe Lady Mary says she used to go hungry—— it was very sad, haw—— haw——

Annette. (*Indignant.*) Oh! Lord Nevers, is your coronet made of tin?

Nevers. Tin, my coronet made of tin? Good gracious, Miss Palmerston, what ever put that idea into your head?

Annette. What is it made of?

Nevers. My coronet? why, I don't know. I never saw it but once.

Annette. (*Appearing startled.*) It wasn't in pawn?

Nevers. Miss Palmerston, you affront me.

Annette. Oh! no, I don't. I didn't mean to. But you gave me such a surprise. One of our papers, they do say such horrid things, said so many of the nobility had to get their coronets out of pawn for the coronation, that when you said you had only seen it once, I was quite surprised out of my good manners. Do sit down, Lord Nevers, and forgive me. (*He sits.*) Now let us go back to the starting

point. You were kindly telling me how rotten—— no, I mean how very ripe, the English nobility is. Perhaps that is why they are so often plucked.

Nevers. (Laughing.) Oh! I see you are just jollying. You American girls are the deuce, don't you know. (*Adjusting his eye glass.*)

Annette. (Sweetly.) Are we?

Nevers. We never quite know how to take you. You say so much and mean so little.

Annette. Oh! do we? Perhaps we say a great deal and mean a lot more.

Nevers. Oh! no, not quite that, you couldn't do that.

Annette. Why not?

Nevers. One can't possibly mean such an awful lot, don't you know.

Annette. Oh! (*Significantly.*)

Nevers. (Self-complacently.) You undoubtedly have great things in the States, very great improvements in many ways. Of course we must oftentimes seem a little old-fashioned—— a little, I suppose, what you call behind the times. But, then, if our houses are not properly heated; Lady Mary can never get over the shivers she had at Tanguay. Haw—— haw.

Annette. I don't think I would mind a cold castle if a warm heart went with it.

Nevers. You wouldn't mind, oh!—— aw—— must it be a castle?

Annette. (Impatient.) It need not be anything, if there is only the warm heart.

Nevers. Oh!—— aw—— really—— how you Americans do go in for heat, don't you know.

Annette. (Controlling herself.) We do rather like warmth. It seems rather a crude idea, I suppose. Cold calculation seems to go with a complete civilization, does it not?

Nevers. Oh! no, Miss Palmerston, not altogether. You quite misunderstand us. Now what you are pleased to call cold calculation is only a natural pride, a desire for something above that which is common.

Annette. Do your peers always keep such noble sentiments well in mind?

Nevers. (*Adjusting his glass.*) Pretty generally, Miss Palmerston, pretty generally. You see (*With a grand air*) it would never do for us as a class to allow those beneath us——

Annette. What do you mean by “those beneath us,” Lord Nevers?

Nevers. (*With self-assurance.*) Naturally the middle and lower classes. Every society, that is every well-ordered society has classes. Why, even you in your country have those you look down upon.

Annette. I fear we do, but they usually deserve it.

Nevers. Exactly, they deserve it. Not having the advantages of culture and refinement they naturally show their imperfections, and so are incompetent to assume a commanding place in society. You say, for instance, in marrying you would want a man.

Annette. Oh! yes, of course. But I would not refuse a duke just because he was a duke, you know.

Nevers. Refuse a duke! (*Aghast at the thought.*) I should think not.

Annette. But people have.

Nevers. Refused a duke! Impossible!

Annette. (*With significance.*) I happen to know it can be done.

Nevers. You know it can be done. Really, Miss Palmerston, I cannot quite understand——

Annette. I see you cannot, so we will talk about something you can grasp more easily.

Nevers. Grasp more easily? Oh! haw—— haw.

Annette. You seem amused?

Nevers. I am. Haw—— haw. So you refused the duke, haw—— haw. Poor duke.

Annette. If you mean the Duke of Clampton, I did not. I did not have the opportunity.

Nevers. No, oh! no, of course not. Clampton is out of the running. Of course—— I forgot.

Annette. Out of the running, I don't understand?

Nevers. Married already, they say, something common.

Annette. How sad!

Nevers. Yes, very sad, very indeed. Such opportunities! Yes, very sad.

Annette. Opportunities. What opportunities?

Nevers. Being a duke—— don't you know. Only a few dukes. Mostly picked up by Americans. But aside from his title Clampton isn't much.

Annette. He is not much to look at.

Nevers. No, not much! Little man. (*Draws himself up, supremely conscious of his fine figure.*) Not a man, ha——

Annette. Not quite. He came to see me. Something about the place, he said. He remained rather long. I referred him to my agent. But it had no effect on him.

Nevers. Haw—— haw. Clampton is rather dull.

Annette. I did not know he was married or I might have been rather more polite. In fact I felt rather sorry for him.

Nevers. Sorry for him! Sorry for a duke! Really you Americans are a most extraordinary people.

Annette. But he looked so poor.

Nevers. Poor! I am surprised! Why he ruins himself with clothes.

Annette. Exactly, it seemed so sad for him to put all his money into dress and have to rent his home. Besides, his clothes made him look so insignificant. It was really pitiable. I thought of Crecy and Agincourt and wondered how those good old warriors would have dropped off their horses had they ever seen their miserable descendent.

Nevers. Miss Palmerston, you certainly are original. I should never have supposed anyone would have thought of that. It is no wonder he is so taken with that music hall singer. They say she is quite common.

Annette. But I thought you just said something about being able to look down upon the middle classes.

Nevers. Oh! aw—— now—— did I? Well, you see we don't always quite live up to our position. It is true, Miss Palmerston, that some of us lapse. Not all. Now dukes, you know, have a little too much rein. They sometimes forget their position. But we lesser ones—— well, we try to be men. (*Straightening his figure.*) Such men as you yourself might admire.

Annette. But, Lord Nevers, if you have gained the idea that I want to marry—— marry a guardsman's uniform——

Nevers. No, no, not a uniform, no, not a uniform, but the man under it.

Annette. I don't quite see, Lord Nevers, where you gained the idea that I wanted to marry at all.

Nevers. Marry—— why marry, we must all marry, it is the lot of man.

Annette. You mean the fate of women.

Nevers. Haw—— haw—— well, how many women are ready to meet their fate, haw—— haw. Quite rush to it, don't you know. Really you American girls have such a delightful sense of humor. Really that sounds just like Joan of Arc—— haw—— haw.

Annette. (*Smiling.*) I am sorry if you think I have any desire to be a martyr, I haven't.

Nevers. No, no, of course not. We could never let you. You come among us as our guest. We would never make you a martyr.

Annette. (*With malice.*) Thank you, Lord Nevers, for that. I now feel safe.

Nevers. Safe! why, bless you, you are quite safe with us. (*Getting nearer.*) You don't really know, Miss Palmerston, how deep an interest we all take in you.

Annette. You are so kind.

Nevers. We mean to be kind. We all mean to be kind, and some wish, perhaps, to be kinder than the others.

Annette. (*Pleasantly.*) That is nice, nobody dislikes kindness.

Nevers. (*Much encouraged.*) I am sure, Miss Palmerston, I can hardly express the interest I take in you.

Annette. Oh! well, if it is a great effort, don't do it.

Nevers. But it is not an effort.

Annette. Oh! I thought it was! What is it then?

Nevers. It is—— haw—— haw—— well, it is not easy to put into words, that is, in the right words. You see things must be put into right words—— you know—— to make the proper impression.

Annette. (*A little frightened.*) I think it is getting very late. Really——

Nevers. Don't go. I assure you it is not late.

Annette. But I think (*Rising*) you mistake. I am sure I heard the clock strike twelve.

Nevers. But just stay a moment, I have something quite important to say to you—

Annette. I think I heard a step, hush! I do. Good night, Lord Nevers, I hope you will sleep well.

Nevers. But I may speak to you tomorrow?

Annette. (*Hastily.*) Yes, tomorrow. (*Exit, and MONTE enters.*)

Nevers. Well?

Monte. I have tried to find you before, my lord.

Nevers. You have learned something?

Monte. Yes, my lord.

Nevers. Well, out with it.

Monte. Well, my lord, she isn't worth anything.

Nevers. What, not worth anything? You have made a mistake!

Monte. No, my lord, I have positive proof that some one is paying her bills.

Nevers. Bills, you scoundrel, what do you mean?

Monte. (*Affronted.*) I beg to remind your lordship I am not a servant.

Nevers. Yes, yes, I know. But it is inconceivable. Some one is paying her bills? Who would ever put up for Clampton? I tell you, Monte, you are on the wrong track.

Monte. No, I am sure. I have seen the proof with my own eyes. (*Thinking.*) Perhaps I can get the proof for a moment, but only for a moment. I am certain, my lord. I know some one pays her bills. I will hurry. You remain here. Only just for a moment, for you to see. (*Exit.*)

Nevers. Heavens, what an escape! But it can't be true. No man would ever put up for Clampton. Why, the idea is simply absurd. (*Enter MRS. COURTENAY.*) My dear, I am so glad you came in.

Mrs. Courtenay. I have wondered where you were. I supposed you were doing your duty. So I did not hunt you up. I just saw Miss Palmerston going to bed. Oh! do tell me, did she accept you?

Nevers. No, thank God, she didn't have the chance.

Mrs. Courtenay. Oh! Nevers, what a fool you are! You simply have got to get married. I actually cannot get the prince to give another penny. He is so mean. Actually gets my bills and adds them up. Could there ever be anything so low?

Nevers. My dear—— damn the prince.

Mrs. Courtenay. But I can't, you know that, and you can't either. Now what are you going to do?

Nevers. Heaven knows, I had a jolly miss.

Mrs. Courtenay. Do explain!

Nevers. She hasn't a penny! Some one pays her bills.

Mrs. Courtenay. (*With a scream.*) Oh! never, never, it is impossible. It can't be! No, no, what with Clampton? I never heard of such a thing. Why, she has the very best of letters. Mrs. Bampton told me so. Not even a parvenue. Actually has money and isn't vulgar. Now don't tell me, Nevers. I know the world, she isn't that kind.

Nevers. That kind! There are all kinds. It is only money enough, my dear, you know that.

Mrs. Courtenay. Now don't throw that at me. I do the best I can, but the prince is different. I tell you it isn't so.

Nevers. Well, we will soon have the proof!

Mrs. Courtenay. The proof! what proof?

Nevers. Why, Monte, my valet. He is really a detective, goes on that business.

Mrs. Courtenay. Why, Nevers, you dear. I never supposed you had so much sense.

Nevers. Oh! I don't think I am such an awful fool. (*Enter LADY MARY.*) Well, it is a nice chase you are in.

Lady Mary. Chase! Me in! Lord Nevers, you surprise me. But then you never did anything else. What—— now what was I going to say?

Nevers. Nothing, of course, you were only waiting for me to say it.

Lady Mary. Well then, say it.

Nevers. Your bird has flown.

Lady Mary. My bird has flown! How very odd! I don't remember ever keeping a bird. My bird! To be sure I have heard some one say Johnny was a bird. I did not know

just what they meant. Now I am quite sure that Johnny hasn't wings, now have you, Johnny? (*Who enters*).

Johnny. Not that I know of, Lady Mary. I'd fly well. I'd fly a lot better than Clampton ever did.

Lady Mary. To be sure you would, Johnny. But now, what was I saying?

Nevers. You were not saying, Lady Mary, I was saying, your goose is cooked.

Lady Mary. My goose? Why, Johnny, where are you?

Johnny. I'm no goose.

Lady Mary. Well, I should think not.

Nevers. But I have great news.

All. News! Do tell, we can't wait.

Nevers. We are all here under the greatest mistake. Miss Palmerston has no money at all.

All. No money at all!

Nevers. No, I have proof, or I will have it soon.

All. Heavens, what an awful thing!

Nevers. Yes, it is awful. To ask us here under false pretences. Simply it is not right.

Mrs. Courtenay. But, *Nevers*, you have no proof as yet.

Lady Mary. But I am at sea, what is it all about? I don't believe that Miss Palmerston has no money. It isn't so, I know it isn't so. Why, Tanguay——

Nevers. Undoubtedly knows all about it. He was going to leave in the morning. But will stay over to please Miss Palmerston.

Lady Mary. And then, he has not compromised himself?

Nevers. A man never compromises himself.

Lady Mary. (*Viciously*.) Some men can't, they have got beyond it.

Nevers. Ta—— ta—— Lady Mary.

Lady Mary. I don't believe it. Mrs. Bampton told me——

Nevers. But, Lady Mary, you have not heard all.

Lady Mary. I haven't. Pray what is all?

Nevers. Some one is paying her bills.

Lady Mary. (*Screams*.) Paying her bills! Lord *Nevers*, I don't understand. I won't understand you. Where is Tanguay? Oh! where is he, such talk! And where is Mrs. Bampton, she knows. Oh! where is she? (*Enter MONTE.*)

Monte. My lord.

Nevers. Speak, Monte.

Monte. I have here the proof.

All. The proof!

Monte. Yes! Yes, the proof I promised. (*To NEVERS.*) Shall I speak?

Nevers. Yes, speak, we are all interested.

Monte. I have here a check signed by someone for ten thousand pounds.

Nevers. By whom?

Monte. Must I tell?

Lady Mary. Tell! of course you must tell. But you must tell the truth. Tell me, Lord Nevers, what this all means.

Nevers. Lady Mary, it simply means I came to this house with the understanding that I was to meet a great heiress.

Lady Mary. Well, you have done that before. (*With significance.*)

Nevers. True. (*Paying no attention to her sneer.*) But as great heiresses are rare I made up my mind to be quite sure just how great an heiress I was to meet.

Lady Mary. A very delicate way of paying for your hospitality.

Nevers. I can only plead the excuse of example. Lord Tanguay was here when I arrived.

Lady Mary. But that was different. Tanguay has always led a decent life.

Nevers. He has? Not inevitably a family trait.

Lady Mary. (*Angry.*) Please go on.

Nevers. I engaged a valet. He is supposed to have very wide open eyes.

Lady Mary. In other words a detective. Proceed.

Nevers. He has learned that some one pays Miss Palmerston's bills.

Lady Mary. And who pays your bills?

Nevers. I never talk finance with the ladies.

Lady Mary. Oh! it isn't always nice, is it? Still they call themselves ladies. (*With a glance around.*) But that does not let us know who signed that check. Show it. (*To MONTE.*)

Monte. I have the honor. (*LADY MARY reads.*)

Lady Mary. My God!

All. What is it, do tell us what it is?

Lady Mary. It isn't true, it isn't true. Oh! where is Mrs. Bampton? Where is Tanguay? Say, Johnny, run quick, call Tanguay. He is in the smoking room. (*JOHNNY exit.*)

Mrs. Courtenay. Let me see the check. (*Takes it and NEVERS looks on.*)

Together. Signed San Lucar!

Monte. You see, my lord, it is signed by the rich marquis.

Nevers. And he has bought the place?

Monte. I believe he has, my lord. I have reason to believe it.

Lady Mary. But how did you get the check?

Monte. I am not at liberty to say, my lady.

Lady Mary. That miserable maid Jeanette.

Monte. I cannot say, my lady, and I must have it at once. (*Takes it and leaves.*)

Mrs. Courtenay. Did you ever see such a pack of fools as we are?

Nevers. I don't know. Filthy Lucre is coming. There may be something yet. Holy Lucre, Haw—— haw—— Funny—— it's only filthy lucre after all. Haw—— haw—— the world is very much the same—— haw—— haw——.

Mrs. Courtenay. Yes, we must not be too precipitate. It may be a mistake after all. (*Enter TANGUAY.*)

Tanguay. You want me? What do you want me for at this time of night?

Lady Mary. Oh! Tanguay, it is such a mess! I don't understand it, but Miss Palmerston has no money after all.

Tanguay. Well, who cares?

Lady Mary. But we all care, and, Tanguay, they say she does not pay her own bills—— that——

Tanguay. Well, what of that?

Lady Mary. They say some one else pays them.

Tanguay. I don't understand.

Lady Mary. They say that her bills are paid by Holy Lucre.

Tanguay. Holy Lucre! (*Mystified.*) who is Holy Lucre?

Lady Mary. Why, you know, that enormously rich man, the Marquis of San Lucar.

Tanguay. The Marquis of San Lucar—— the—— Monte Christo—— that—— well——

Lady Mary. And, Tanguay, you know it isn't—— very—— nice.

Tanguay. (*In a rage.*) Who dares to say that of Annette Palmerston?

Nevers. I do, Tanguay! You might as well give up the chase.

Tanguay. (*Rushing up to him, shaking his fist.*) You—— you base, miserable sponge, you sponge—— you—— but decency forbids—— you—— you lie.

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE. — *The garden terrace next morning. Chairs and awnings, with hedge rows. MRS. COURTENAY enters right, and NEVERS left.*

Mrs Courtenay. Oh! Nevers, what an awful mess! Really, I never made such a mistake in my life. I couldn't eat a thing, I was so upset. So I just threw on something and came for a walk. Everything upset, everything in chaos. Why, where shall I spend the next two weeks. (*In despair.*)

Nevers. The next two weeks, why, right here, of course. No place could be better. Surely the food is good enough. It is for me. The chef gets two thousand pounds, and is worth it.

Mrs. Courtenay. But, Nevers, you know I can't stay now, it is simply impossible.

Nevers. I don't see why.

Mrs. Courtenay. But, Nevers, think of my reputation.

Nevers. (*Surprised.*) Your reputation— your reputation! Don't you think, my dear, your reputation can take care of itself at this late day?

Mrs. Courtenay. But, Nevers, what will the prince think?

Nevers. The prince, oh! I forgot. Well, Courtenay won't care, at any rate.

Mrs. Courtenay. Oh! Courtenay, he doesn't count.

Nevers. I did not suppose the prince was so particular.

Mrs. Courtenay. Oh! he is just awful. Perfectly hates anything like a scandal.

Nevers. Well, there isn't any scandal— that is not yet. If we just keep still it will be all right.

Mrs. Courtenay. But think of Tanguay making such a fool of himself. Lady Mary was awfully put out.

Nevers. Oh! Tanguay is always like that. He thinks he has got all the virtue that's going, or pretends he has. I fancy, really, the poor chap was dreadfully upset to lose the prize.

Mrs. Courtenay. But, Nevers, it was a dirty trick passing herself off as a great heiress, and inviting a lot of respectable people——

Nevers. What did you say, my dear—— I didn't hear.

Mrs. Courtenay. A lot of respectable people down here, and imposing upon society this way. I feel as though I would never speak to a new person again so long as I live.

Nevers. (*Shrugging his shoulders.*) I never supposed you were so sensitive.

Mrs. Courtenay. Sensitive! I am not sensitive. But to be asked to spend a fortnight by a—— a——

Nevers. An heiress, is really unusual.

Mrs. Courtenay. Now, Nevers, you needn't talk to me that way. I have my position to keep up, and you know the prince would never for a moment stand this. Besides, something has got to be done for the public. What an example this would be if it were known. Why, I quite shiver when I think of the consequences, if it should ever get out. I tell you I must go. You are a man, you have no reputation to maintain.

Nevers. Thank you, you are right. I found the sooner I got rid of mine the easier it was. And, by gad, I have not only had a better time of it, but I really fancy I am more respected.

Mrs. Courtenay. Respected. Silly word! That will do for middle class people.

Nevers. But, my dear, don't be rash. You have no place to go to.

Mrs. Courtenay. I could choke that Bampton woman.

Nevers. You have done very well with her. She has let you in for several good things.

Mrs. Courtenay. Yes, I know. Fortunately she has never let me in for such a thing as this before, and Miss Palmerston looks so like a lady——

Nevers. She is a lady, every inch a lady. Don't you call yourself a lady?

Mrs. Courtenay. (*Tossing her head.*) To be sure I do.

Nevers. Well—— ahem!

Mrs. Courtenay. You mean the prince. You are always throwing him at me. You know yourself he doesn't count, he is royalty.

Nevers. To be sure. Everything on its own plane. Now, why isn't this Holy Lucre, or Filthy Lucre, just about as good? They say he has money enough to buy up all the royal houses in Europe. It is quite wonderful how much he is worth.

Mrs. Courtenay. (*Reflecting.*) There is a good deal in what you say.

Nevers. They say even the Czar has no larger income.

Mrs. Courtenay. Nevers!

Nevers. Fact! I can't just say what are the figures, but it is simply enormous. They say he owns small kingdoms, kingdoms not even worked. His old uncle was very wise in his day and bought up quantities of seemingly useless property.

Mrs. Courtenay. And it can be developed?

Nevers. Of course. I am going to stay. You didn't think I came here for my health?

Mrs. Courtenay. I'll stay too.

Nevers. Why not? San Lucar is worth a whole bunch of princes.

Mrs. Courtenay. But the position——

Nevers. (*Quizically.*) The position, what do you mean?

Mrs. Courtenay. Don't be silly, the social position.

Nevers. I never knew anyone to lack social position if he or she had enough money—— and knew how to use it.

Mrs. Courtenay. Oh! yes I have.

Nevers. Well, then, they didn't use it enough.

Mrs. Courtenay. I say, Nevers, you are a devil.

Nevers. (*Complacently.*) Yes, my dear, that is why you like me.

Mrs. Courtenay. You don't think—— you are a good judge of women.

Nevers. (*Quizzically.*) I don't as a rule. It is laborious and usually useless.

Mrs. Courtenay. Well, think now. You don't think I am so very unattractive?

Nevers. Unattractive, gracious, woman, what are you talking about? Haven't you got the prince crazy? And haven't you made a complete conquest of—

Mrs. Courtenay. (*Eagerly.*) Of a man whom—

Nevers. Most women, oh! well— I really can't say it. (*Straightening himself up.*) To whom most women are not entirely indifferent.

Mrs. Courtenay. You conceited thing! But I think you are right. (*Sitting down and fanning herself with a paper lying near.*)

Nevers. Now look here, my dear, the game is not up yet. We are well entrenched, it is a secret known only to a few, that San Lucar pays the bills. If we always looked too closely whence comes our bread and butter, for instance most kitchens, we would not eat. Now, we must eat, so we choose the most tempting viands that come in our way. We eat, therefore we live!

Mrs. Courtenay. True!

Nevers. Now, I prefer to live well. To quarrel with our food means indigestion at least. Physicians say, eat with a happy mind and a contented spirit. I do! To quarrel to the breaking point means starvation. Only fools starve!

Mrs. Courtenay. True. Then you think—

Nevers. I never think, I simply eat, when eating comes my way. Naturally to think might disturb my digestion in my distressed financial condition. And to be able to think at the proper moment requires the very best stomachic equipment.

Mrs. Courtenay. But then, to come down to facts. If the prince—and some one else who really knows a fine woman when he sees one—

Nevers. I never come down to fact. To come down to fact is to grovel. I never grovel. I eat if the chef— gets two thousand pounds—and I wait. Under those circumstances it is easy and usually best.

Mrs. Courtenay. And we will wait?

Nevers. Why not? Mrs. Bampton enjoys the very best of reputations. In fact her figure is a sworn document. She is your sponsor. Lady Mary is most highly born. She

does William the Conqueror, the fellow we brag of, one better, her parents were married.

Mrs. Courtenay. Oh! never mind that. It seems so unimportant in these days when the peerage is not even like a wise child.

Nevers. Then, we have never seen the check signed by San Lucar?

Mrs. Courtenay. No, never, certainly not. (*They both laugh.*) How about Tanguay?

Nevers. Oh! Lady Mary will take care of him. He is an enthusiast. Goes in for the purity of the lower classes—

Mrs. Courtenay. Yes, we must do what we can for them, of course. The prince would wish it. In fact he is very keen about it.

Nevers. Of course, of course! (*Enter JOHNNY and BABY, who appear surprised.*)

Mrs. Courtenay. Why, Baby, you here.

Baby. Yes, mamma, I never thought to see you. (*Still surprised.*) I never knew you to get up so early.

Mrs. Courtenay. Just business, my dear. Well, Johnny, what are you doing here?

Johnny. Just business! (*Meaningly.* *MRS. COURTENAY looks angry.*)

Baby. Mamma, it was such a nice morning and Johnny actually got up to breakfast, and I actually got up to breakfast, and so we met, wasn't it funny?

Mrs. Courtenay. (*Suspiciously.*) Yes, very.

Baby. And, mamma, did you and Lord Nevers just get up for breakfast?

Mrs. Courtenay. (*Impatient.*) No, of course not, we only met out here. We have business to talk over. So I think, Nevers, we will take a little stroll. (*Exeunt.*)

Baby. Isn't it funny we all just happened to meet? (*Laughing.*) I like to just happen to meet, don't you, Johnny?

Johnny. I like to just happen to meet you! But I think, Baby, you said when I left you in the conservatory you would be down to breakfast.

Baby. Did I? How imprudent! Mamma would scold me if she knew.

Johnny. Well, she will never know. By the way, there was an awful row in the library after you went to bed.

Baby. Row, and I wasn't there, Johnny? Why didn't you call me?

Johnny. I didn't quite find out myself. All I know was Lady Mary came out in a towering rage and Tanguay looked like murder. They sent me after Tanguay and I got in just too late, but I heard him say—"Nevers, you lie."

Baby. How awful!

Johnny. Yes, you must never say to a man he lies, for he generally does, and there is absolutely nothing so rude as the truth.

Baby. Yes, I hate the truth. If nobody ever told the truth I could be so happy.

Johnny. You could, sweetheart? Suppose I never told you I loved you?

Baby. I shouldn't care. You needn't blab everything you know to me. I can see some things for myself.

Johnny. Yes, so can I. But don't you like to hear it once in a while?

Baby. I don't know. Do you know I get so tired hearing people say it that I sometimes wish I could never hear it again.

Johnny. You do? Then I won't say it any more!

Baby. (*Reflectively.*) Well, you see, old Bampton is always saying the same thing.

Johnny. He is?

Baby. Yes, he is just an old fool anyway. He doesn't mean a word he says.

Johnny. He doesn't?

Baby. No, he just says those things because he says it seems to be expected in my family, and he wants to keep up to the mark and not be rude.

Johnny. Oh! in your family?

Baby. Yes, I haven't an idea what he means, but it seems to be rather common, now I think of it. Nobody ever talks anything else. Even the Reverend Houghton was talking love the other day. I didn't exactly listen, but I suppose it was the same old thing.

Johnny. What, the meenister?

Baby. They can't help it! I heard mamma say it was love that made the world go round. It seemed a nice sentiment, so I remembered it.

Johnny. You always remember nice sentiments?

Baby. Always, when they have anything to do about love.

Johnny. Oh! but, Baby, don't listen to anyone but me.

Baby. I never do! But I forgot, what was Lord Tanguay so mad about?

Johnny. I don't know, some foolishness.

Baby. But Jeanette was so funny this morning. She said Meester Monte, as she calls him, was that perky——

Johnny. Perky? What has he got to be perky about?

Baby. She said he was putting on all those airs, and laughed and laughed at her so, that she was quite disturbed.

Johnny. Well, Lady Mary sent me out last night on the jump to find Tanguay, and I hadn't much chance to know what it was all about, some deviltry of Nevers, I'll bet.

Baby. Don't speak that way of Lord Nevers. He's mamma's friend.

Johnny. Yes, I know that. (*Enter BAMPTON.*) Ah! what's up, old chap?

Bampton. Eh! up? I don't understand. My temper will be up if you call me old chap.

Johnny. Never mind, we are just pals. Say, what happened last night?

Bampton. Happened last night! Good heavens, did anything happen?

Johnny. Well, I should say so. Where were you? Were you asleep?

Bampton. I, why I—— I was—— now where was I?

Johnny. Well, never mind, something big has happened. I heard something about a check, and Tanguay told Nevers he lied, and Nevers laughed——

Baby. Of course he laughed! It must have been so funny to have anyone tell him that. Why, he must have known it already.

Johnny. Oh! Baby, what are you talking about?

Baby. He does lie at times, he says so himself. We all do!

Johnny. Why, Baby!

Bampton. You little moral wretch!

Baby. Call me names if you like, I don't care. I don't, so there.

Johnny. Something about a check, and Tanguay got mad, and when I asked Lady Mary afterwards she was so rude as to say children should be seen and not heard. So I went to bed.

Baby. Wasn't she rude?

Bampton. If something is up I must go and tell the old lady. She will soon find it out. (*Exit.*)

Baby. Yes do, we are busy. Now, Johnny, tell me all about it. Whose check was it? I do so love checks, don't you?

Johnny. Yes, when they are big enough.

Baby. Was this big?

Johnny. Ten thousand pounds, made out to Miss Palmerston. (*BABY falls off her chair and JOHNNY catches her.*)

Baby. Please be more careful, Johnny, don't give me such awful shocks. When you have anything startling break it to me gently. Ten thousand pounds, why it would give mamma hysterics if anyone sent her ten thousand pounds. (*Enter HOUGHTON.*) Now for a sermon! (*BABY straightens up and looks very solemn.*)

Houghton. Did I hear you say anything about ten thousand pounds?

Baby. Yes, Johnny was telling me a fairy tale.

Houghton. A fairy tale? You still like fairy tales?

Baby. Oh! yes, when they have got a lot of money in them.

Houghton. Money in them! Then you, child, are already thinking about money?

Baby. Money, why yes. Don't you ever think about money? Only just heaven?

Houghton. I sometimes have to think about it, I must confess.

Baby. I thought meenisters never thought about the world or anything naughty. That is why I like them so much.

Houghton. Then you like meenisters?

Baby. Yes, when they tell nice fairy stories. I like to go to church when the meenister preaches about Ruth and Boas.

Houghton. You do?

Baby. Yes, for I am sure Ruth was an English woman.

Houghton. You are?

Baby. Hu—— hu—— she went in for the richest old chap going.

Houghton. My dear!

Baby. Don't call me my dear, every man calls me that, and if you do it will interfere with your ministerial character.

Houghton. (*Somewhat shocked.*) But what was the story about ten thousand pounds?

Baby. It was a fairy story. No one ever really has ten thousand pounds at one time.

Houghton. Are you sure?

Baby. Quite sure. If mamma has a hundred pounds all at one time she feels quite rich. I have heard her say so. And ten thousand pounds—— why it would kill her. (*Turns to JOHNNY.*)

Houghton. Ten thousand pounds! What is up? Ten thousand pounds! Let me think. I—— but—— it cannot be. Now, Miss Courtenay, don't talk fairy talk to that young man all the time. (*Exit.*)

Baby. Didn't he act funny? I suppose he never heard of ten thousand pounds. It must be dreadful to be so poor as never to have seen money. Do you know, Johnny, I feel quite happy just thinking of it. Say it some more.

Johnny. Ten thousand pounds.

Baby. Say it slower.

Johnny. Ten—— thou—— sand—— pounds.

Baby. There, that is good. Oh! here come the Bamptons. (*They run off. Enter MR. and MRS. BAMPTON.*)

Mrs. Bampton. (*Horried.*) And you say something is up. Good gracious! And Tanguay told Nevers he lied, what awful manners!

Bampton. (*Eagerly.*) Yes, and if you don't watch out the whole party will turn out in a row.

Mrs. Bampton. A row, why I never heard of such a thing. At a party I got up myself! Now, Bampton, you are always in the clouds, just come down to earth and explain.

Bampton. My dear, that little scamp had Johnny in a corner as usual and he was relating something about a ten thousand pound check——

Mrs. Bampton. Ten thousand pound check! Absurd, people don't draw ten thousand pound checks, unless they are dealing in stocks.

Bampton. Well, at any rate there was this check drawn for ten thousand pounds, and Nevers said something about it and Tanguay told him he lied.

Mrs. Bampton. And Nevers, what did he do?

Bampton. Just laughed!

Mrs. Bampton. Just like him, he would laugh if he were going to be hanged. What did I have him asked for?

Bampton. To please the Courtenay woman, of course.

Mrs. Bampton. Oh! yes, I know I had to. One can't get on without her. Oh! what shall I do? A scandal, and it will get out and into the papers, and then I will be in a nice position. But I must find out at once. Oh! here is Lady Mary. (*LADY MARY enters.*) I am so glad you are up. Do tell us what is the matter.

Lady Mary. (*Severely.*) Matter, well you ought to know if anyone does.

Mrs. Bampton. I know? I haven't an idea what you are talking of. Here is Bampton going around like a hen with her head cut off.

Bampton. (*Sadly.*) But poor thing she has lost her head——

Mrs. Bampton. So you have, apparently.

Lady Mary. I really do not feel equal to telling you. I am so shocked——

Mrs. Bampton. (*Shocked.*) What is it?

Lady Mary. It is—— simply—— but I can't say it—— I can't. (*Sinks into a seat.*)

Bampton. (*Earnestly.*) Then write it.

Lady Mary. (*Gasping.*) Mrs. Bampton you got us here.

Mrs. Bampton. Yes, my dear, of course, but I do not understand.

Lady Mary. What kind of a—— woman is she?

Mrs. Bampton. (*Astonished.*) She—— she—— what she?

Lady Mary. Oh! you know. You must know, you are in the plot, you must be——

Mrs. Bampton. Plot—— (*Screams.*) plot, a plot—— you don't mean murder?

Lady Mary. Yes I do. (*MRS. BAMPTON again screams.*) It is as good as murder. I was never placed in such a position in my life. I must leave at once. I really must, I must get right out. (*Rises.*)

Mrs. Bampton. If you don't tell me I shall die!

Bampton. Wait, dear, until we get some definite news.

Lady Mary. And she looks so innocent. I will never trust anyone again so long as I live. Such a night! Heavens what an escape Tanguay has had.

Mrs. Bampton. Lady Mary, you must speak.

Bampton. You really must—— to save life.

Lady Mary. That check—— that check.

Mrs. Bampton. Check? There, Bampton, it was the check.

Bampton. (*Eagerly.*) For ten thousand pounds——

Lady Mary. (*Shuddering.*) Yes, for ten thousand pounds, that was it.

Mrs. Bampton. What was the matter with the check, wasn't it good?

Lady Mary. (*Trying to keep up.*) Yes, it was good, much too good.

Mrs. Bampton. But I can't see anything very bad about a ten thousand pound check.

Lady Mary. It was made out to your—— friend.

Mrs. Bampton. My friend!

Lady Mary. Yes, to Miss Palmerston.

Bampton. But I don't see anything strange about that.

Mrs. Bampton. No, she must have money, why not?

Lady Mary. (*Pulling herself together.*) But it was signed by Filthy Lucre.

Bampton. Filthy Lucre, why, that's a joke. Of course we all know ten thousand pounds is filthy lucre.

Lady Mary. (*Gasping.*) I mean Holy Lucre.

Bampton. Well, I should think you perhaps would be more likely to call it holy lucre, it is your god, I believe. Quite right!

Lady Mary. (Recovered and giving BAMPTON a crushing look.) I mean it was signed by the Marquis of San Lucar.

Both Bamptons. The Marquis of San Lucar, the rich man from South America.

Lady Mary. (Savagely.) Yes, by him.

Mrs. Bampton. Well, I suppose he can sign checks if he wishes.

Lady Mary. But it is to pay Miss Palmerston's bills.

Mrs. Bampton. (Dense.) Paying her bills, I suppose some one is paying her bills.

Lady Mary. (Contemptuously.) That is just it. I see you are one of the conspirators, and I shall never forgive you for getting me and Tanguay into this awful scrape. Why, I simply shudder when I think of it!

Mrs. Bampton. Really, *(Indignant.)* Lady Mary, I must demand an explanation. I still fail to see what you are trying to insinuate, and I do not mind saying, after the years I have known you, I am greatly surprised.

Lady Mary. (Pausing in her wrath.) You don't see? How can you help but see?

Mrs. Bampton. I may be dull, but I do not see. I only know you make the most unwarrantable insinuations, and have apparently no ground for making them.

Lady Mary. (Impatiently.) Do you not see you have introduced to us a young woman as of unimpeachable character, as a great heiress, and got us all here as her guests— *(Hesitating.)*

Mrs. Bampton. Yes, I see all that, it is quite true.

Lady Mary. But last night I saw with my own eyes the check signed by Filthy Lucre.

Mrs. Bampton. But what does that mean? I do not believe that Miss Palmerston knows the Holy Lucre, as you call him. If she does it is no offence. She may have business relations with him, that is none of my affair. Pray how did you learn all this?

Lady Mary. From Lord Nevers and Mrs. Courtenay.

Mrs. Bampton. Now really, Lady Mary, from your own conversation I have learned they are hardly reliable witnesses.

Lady Mary. It does not matter so much about their reliability as about what they will report. People will believe

what they say while they may not believe in them. Such is life and such is society!

Bampton. It is very strange, very strange. I felt something very strange when I came into this house.

Mrs. Bampton. Oh! you are always feeling things. Everything except your indebtedness. You let me feel that.

Bampton. Huh—— what did you say. Oh! why don't you ask Miss Palmerston herself who pays her bills?

Mrs. Bampton. (*With contempt.*) Ask her that! I trust I am a lady.

Lady Mary. It certainly would not be an easy undertaking. She seems to have a very cutting way of replying.

Mrs. Bampton. Yes, she is very clever, and very quick. To say anything to her would surely bring some disagreeable reply. I can't do it. Especially with her recommendations.

Lady Mary. Then I will. Something must be done! We can't all leave without some explanation.

Mrs. Bampton. I certainly intend to stay. With a clergyman and his wife, both old friends, with her, I consider her amply protected.

Lady Mary. Clergyman and his wife, forsooth! What do they count for? I have known bishops quite ignore the whole moral law when money or royalty was implicated.

Mrs. Bampton. You don't mean it? How dreadful! What in heaven's name are they for, then?

Lady Mary. I never could see unless it was to keep sinners in society by their countenance. Religion has always condemned sin, but coddled the sinner.

Mrs. Bampton. Dreadful, dreadful. But here comes Miss Palmerston. I leave you to her tender mercies. If you are living when you get through with her we will talk some more. That horrid Nevers. (*Enter MISS PALMERSTON, and exit MR. and MRS. Bampton, on opposite sides.*)

Miss Palmerston. Good morning, Lady Mary. How very fresh and beautiful it is? I do love the English life, it is so pure and sweet.

Lady Mary. (*Severely.*) That depends upon who leads it.

Miss Palmerston. Leads it! (*Surprised.*)

Lady Mary. Yes, it isn't always pure and sweet, as some people lead it.

Miss Palmerston. Oh! I hadn't thought, perhaps not. By the way, have you had breakfast?

Lady Mary. Some time ago, I did not eat much.

Miss Palmerston. Perhaps not enough. Your digestion may be impaired by starvation.

Lady Mary. My digestion is very good. It is my mind that is disturbed.

Miss Palmerston. (*Noticing her hostile attitude, and somewhat amused.*) Your mind? Does it disturb you often?

Lady Mary. Miss Palmerston, do you ever think of sin?

Miss Palmerston. Of sin? Yes, of course. Mr. Houghton frequently alludes to it.

Lady Mary. I don't care anything about Mr. Houghton; he is a humbug.

Miss Palmerston. A humbug, (*Severely.*) pray explain.

Lady Mary. I mean all clergymen are humbugs.

Miss Palmerston. (*Sarcastically.*) You have been unfortunate, you have not met the right kind.

Lady Mary. (*Severely.*) Bishops——

Miss Palmerston. Oh! I quite understand. Well, you see Mr. Houghton is not a bishop, that gives him a chance.

Lady Mary. Mr. Houghton condones offences——

Miss Palmerston. I am surprised. I always thought him very severe on sin.

Lady Mary. Social offences——

Miss Palmerston. But those are quite his hobby. He is very bitter, very bitter indeed, on high class sin. Sometimes he makes me feel quite guilty.

Lady Mary. He does? Then why don't you reform?

Miss Palmerston. (*Bewildered.*) Reform! Have I taken to drink? I didn't know it.

Lady Mary. You know what I mean, where do you get your money?

Miss Palmerston. (*Startled.*) My money! Really——

Lady Mary. (*Seeing her advantage.*) Yes, where do you get your money.

Miss Palmerston. Really! (*Recovering herself.*) your question seems to me very unusual. Is it customary for ladies to enquire, when they are visiting a house, to enter into the domestic details——

Lady Mary. (Baffled.) It is generally understood where the money comes from.

Miss Palmerston. Then, when you visit certain ducal families do you insist upon going back into history and unearthing the various transactions by which historical peeresses gained their wealth?

Lady Mary. (Impatient.) We let the dead bury their dead.

Miss Palmerston. I see! The inability of the dead to perform that gracious task is why history is so redolent with unpleasantness.

Lady Mary. I don't understand you. But I think I have a right to know just how you have gained the money you are said to possess.

Miss Palmerston. (Affronted.) And I think you have no such right. Had you not wished to accept my invitation you were quite at liberty to decline it. You are also now quite at liberty to reconsider your previous mistake. I feel called upon to detail my affairs to no one.

Lady Mary. (Frightened and fearing she has made a mistake.) I beg your pardon, of course. As your guest I owe you much courtesy, and I was hasty; but certain things said to me last night have disturbed my equanimity. Perhaps, as you suggested, I did not eat enough this morning. (ANNETTE bows and goes out. Enter TANGUAY.)

Tanguay. Oh! has she gone?

Lady Mary. Just left, she saw you coming.

Tanguay. Why did she go? I want to see her.

Lady Mary. (Severely.) She probably does not want to see you.

Tanguay. Poor girl, and she doesn't know the vipers she is housing.

Lady Mary. She apparently does not want your pity. It has been a lucky escape, Tanguay. I am glad we found her out in time.

Tanguay. (Furious.) You believe that lie?

Lady Mary. I saw the check!

Tanguay. You saw a check. Just from that check you conclude, or that beastly Nevers concludes, that San Lucar is paying her bills. I tell you it is all a lie—a lie.

Lady Mary. You are violent, Tanguay, you are very violent. I never saw you in such a state before.

Tanguay. You never saw me in love before.

Lady Mary. In love, you are not in love with Miss Palmerston?

Tanguay. I love the very ground she walks on.

Lady Mary. (Scornfully.) That—— that——

Tanguay. Stop, Mary! I tell you to stop! That girl is as pure as the sky above her.

Lady Mary. Fortunately you can't marry her.

Tanguay. I would marry her this minute if she were poor, this very minute.

Lady Mary. (Screams.) Marry her if she were poor? Tanguay, you are crazy!

Tanguay. Never so sane in my life. This beastly wretched thing called money debases us all. It makes us cowards. It has made Nevers a rascal. It makes you a designing, cold-blooded female who hasn't even a right to call herself a woman——

Lady Mary. Tanguay, Tanguay, you are simply daft. I never heard you talk so before.

Tanguay. You have never heard the truth. I have always thought it, and now I say it. You, who should have been a loving, helpful sister to me, you, older and more experienced than I, you, who should have put the better things of life in an attractive guise, you, who should have taught as my mother would have taught me, have dried up that spring of youthful enthusiasm, that love of the noble and right, and made me a base self seeker, looking only for money, money, and never for honor and uprightness. I know it now, and I knew it then, but, before God, I tell you now I will not endure it any longer. I will not blast everything in man to suit a worldly woman's whim. I have found a noble woman, I shall worship her so long as I may live.

Lady Mary. (Aghast.) Even if the Marquis of San Lucar does pay her bills? (*ANNETTE enters.*)

Annette. Good morning, Lord Tanguay. How warm you look.

Tanguay. (Embarrassed.) Do I? It's the heat.

Annette. (Sweetly.) You seemed excited as I saw you in the distance.

Tanguay. I was telling my sister—— what—— a—— miserable world this is.

Annette. (Surprised.) Indeed, both you and Lady Mary seem quite upset about something. Have you had your breakfast?

Tanguay. Yes, but I did not eat very much.

Annette. The same trouble, incipient starvation. Lady Mary makes the same complaint. I am quite sure, Lady Mary, that is the trouble. I am so sorry my cook does not please you. I will speak to him. (*Starts to go but TANGUAY detains her.*)

Lady Mary. And I will continue my walk. Perhaps, Tanguay, you will reconsider your words when you think the matter over. (*Exit.*)

Tanguay. How fresh and rosy you look this morning!

Annette. (Smiling.) Do I? Well, to tell the truth, it is a glorious morning, and everything seems to smile—— everything—— but you are not looking well.

Tanguay. (Turning away perplexed.) I did not get much sleep.

Annette. (Slightly concerned.) Our little talk upset you?

Tanguay. No, it was not that.

Annette. Something else?

Tanguay. Yes, something else.

Annette. I am so sorry. And I woke up very happy this morning. It seems as though the whole world was singing. (*TANGUAY looks at her with a sad smile.*)

Tanguay. Yes, it is singing for you. It should sing for you. Let the world sing while it can. The time may come when it will not. Life is not always a smile, at least not to every one.

Annette. You speak mysteriously. Perhaps I did wrong to ask you to stay.

Tanguay. No, you did quite right. I am very glad I stayed.

Annette. I felt you would. Now we can forget little unpleasantnesses and enjoy ourselves. In spite of your break-

fast or your lack of one just indulge me by a little smile. (*He smiles.*) Oh! not that kind of a smile, a joyous smile. (*He tries.*) Well, that is better, but it lacks the background. It is like a ray of sunshine with a thunderstorm just ready to break. Can't I lend you some of my joyous spirits? And I do feel so happy. (*She plays with the flowers.*) *He clinches his hands and he watches her.*

Tanguay. (Aside.) And I can't tell her, can't tell her the demons she is harboring under her roof.

Annette. What, still sad?

Tanguay. I didn't sleep much last night.

Annette. Not sleep? Did my insistence upon your remaining keep you awake?

Tanguay. No.

Annette. What did, then? Was I unkind?

Tanguay. No indeed!

Annette. (Coaxingly.) You won't tell me?

Tanguay. I cannot.

Annette. You are unhappy, and you will not tell why?
I am happy——

Tanguay. You have no reason to be otherwise.

Annette. (Pausing.) Last night I thought I had no reason to be otherwise. The sun shone out here, and also in my heart——

Tanguay. Then let it shine.

Annette. (Pleading.) I want it to, I do want the sunshine, but——

Tanguay. Enjoy it while you can.

Annette. I want to. I want to, but when I look into your face I see a cloud, and—— Oh! I do not know what it means. Tell me.

Tanguay. You see a cloud? Yes, it is a cloud in my sky, not yours.

Annette. And if in yours why not a little in mine?

Tanguay. (Hesitating.) Is your horizon and mine the same?

Annette. (Catching her breath.) No, no—— not yet—— but perhaps——

Tanguay. You told me last night there was a reason.

Annette. (Struggling with herself.) A reason, did I?

Tanguay. Yes, a reason. I thought of that last night. I thought a good deal of that.

Annette. There can be so many reasons.

Tanguay. True, but this was one.

Annette. (*Fighting for time.*) Did I say just one?

Tanguay. (*Severely, as though beginning to doubt.*) You said one, one you could not tell me then.

Annette. I did, but, there are others.

Tanguay. But just this one. Can you not trust me enough to tell me that one just now?

Annette. But I did not think. There is another. At least there is every reason why I should tell you nothing at all. (*Straightening herself up.*) Lord Tanguay, I have been very foolish. I have—— led—— I mean I have talked to you too much. You have said things to me I should not have heard.

Tanguay. You have forced them out of me.

Annette. I think I did. In fact I forgot. Oh! Lord Tanguay go away and leave me in peace.

Tanguay. But last night you insisted upon my staying.

Annette. Yes, I know. Oh! I was foolish. I should have known better.

Tanguay. Now you want me to go?

Annette. Don't go away from Clampton. Please don't!

Tanguay. But then what do you want?

Annette. (*Desperately.*) I don't know.

Tanguay. But, Annette, Miss Palmerston, you place me in a very unbearable position. Last night I laid bare my heart before you. For one brief moment I hoped you might have some feeling for me. You left me without one word of comfort. You spent the rest of the evening talking with Nevers——

Annette. Oh! don't be jealous of that creature——

Tanguay. That creature—— you say that creature—— he is your guest.

Annette. I know, I forgot myself.

Tanguay. Do you know anything especial about Lord Nevers?

Annette. (*Savagely.*) I hate him. I hope you are satisfied. I hate him!

Tanguay. (Thinking, and aside.) She has found him out. I wonder what he said. Would you tell me why?

Annette. (Rousing herself.) Certainly not. I cannot tell you what passed between Lord Nevers and myself.

Tanguay. Forgive me, I will not ask. *(Piqued.)* But surely after your talk with Nevers, and the way we parted you cannot suppose I had much chance for sleep.

Annette. I am very sorry.

Tanguay. I trust I am not jealous, but I do take some interest in what was said. I am sorry you cannot tell me. It might be better if you did.

Annette. It was nothing, nothing at all. He thinks a great deal of himself. Perhaps he is justified.

Tanguay. Did he—— say anything especial?

Annette. I really cannot tell you what he said. Let us forget the matter. Somehow—— I don't think I feel as happy as I did.

Tanguay. I am so sorry.

Annette. You know, in spite of Lord Nevers I was happy, yes, very happy, after you left me. And I was so happy this morning. But I knew it could not last. Oh! why is it that dreams could never come true?

Tanguay. You dreamed?

Annette. Yes, I dreamed. And oh! such a pleasant dream.

Tanguay. Could I not know what you dreamed?

Annette. Yes, you might know—— it was after all but a dream. I knew—— it—— *(Hesitating.)*

Tanguay. When?

Annette. When I saw your face this morning. But I was determined to keep that dream. I can see it now. *(Looks ecstatic.)*

Tanguay. (Coming near.) Let me see it too.

Annette. I dreamed I was young. Oh! yes, a mere child in the world, and that——

Tanguay. And that——

Annette. The world held nothing base, nothing sordid, that life was all one sweet, happy dream, perfect sunshine, sweet peace and——

Tanguay. And—— *(She stops and looks at him.)*

Annette. And that in this paradise of repose came a vision——

Tanguay. A vision!

Annette. Yes, a vision of someone who was higher than earth, someone who was strong, who was noble, who was fearless, who was brave.

Tanguay. Some one who was higher than earth—— someone who was strong—— someone who was noble—— someone who was fearless—— who was brave. It was a vision!

Annette. And this someone bade me remember that in this sweet sunshine, this perfect bliss, there was a higher plane, and to that plane I had not reached.

Tanguay. And that dream left you happy?

Annette. That dream came to me like a message from above, because it seemed a call to spread my wings and soar to perfect bliss.

Tanguay. I do not think I hardly understand.

Annette. No, you cannot understand, because you do not know.

Tanguay. And why do I not know?

Annette. Because you do not know yourself.

Tanguay. I do not know myself——

Annette. No, but I know——

Tanguay. You know?

Annette. I know, because I know you.

Tanguay. You know me?

Annette. Yes, I know you, and you do not know yourself. Hush, I will tell you. Last night you broke your bonds, you declared that which was in your heart. The man in you spoke, the nobleman declared himself, and the Earl of Tanguay faded out of sight. You did not see, but I saw. I dreamed, and in that dream you were the someone of whom I dreamed.

Tanguay. (*Passionately.*) You love me!

Annette. (*Repelling him gently.*) I said I dreamed. Ah! it was——

Tanguay. No, no, don't say it was a dream, Annette, it was the truth, the truth. For God's sake say yes.

Annette. Why say something I shall always regret?

Tanguay. Regret! why regret?

Annette. You say that you love me. You want me to love you, but you cannot ask me to be your wife.

Tanguay. Why cannot I ask you that?

Annette. Because you cannot, must not.

Tanguay. But, do you love me, that is the question?

Annette. Don't ask me!

Tanguay. I must ask you! I have the right to know. A man who loves a woman, and tells her so, has the right to a plain answer.

Annette. Not always! there may be reasons.

Tanguay. But I must know those reasons. *Annette,* I demand an answer.

Annette. Oh! Alfred, how can you doubt it?

Tanguay. (*Embracing her.*) I knew it. I knew it. (*Kisses her.*)

Annette. (*Struggling.*) You must not, I will not have it. It is not right. I cannot marry you——

Tanguay. You have a reason, you must tell.

Annette. I cannot tell, I cannot tell you now. When I tell you, you will know I am right. Please.

Tanguay. No, I cannot let you go.

Annette. Oh! please, I will tell you, then you will know. (*He releases her.*)

Tanguay. Tell me!

Annette. I am not what I seem—— (*TANGUAY starts.*) I am—— not——

Tanguay. (*Bitterly.*) Don't tell me any more.

Annette. Any more? I must tell you now that I have begun.

Tanguay. (*Passionately.*) I will not hear it. I will believe you are all you seem. (*Aside.*) My God, what am I saying! *Annette,* say you love me!

Annette. I love you, you know I love you.

Tanguay. (*Holding his head.*) That is enough, don't tell me anything more.

Annette. But, Lord Tanguay, Alfred, you seem strange—— what is the matter. (*He reels, she catches him.*) Are you dizzy?

Tanguay. (*Gasping.*) Yes—— I—— am—— dizzy.

Annette. Sit down! (*Pushes him into a chair.*) Let me call someone.

Tanguay. (*Alarmed.*) Oh! please don't. Tell me once more—— that dream.

Annette. My dream! (*He takes her hand.*)

Tanguay. Yes, please, just once. The world held——

Annette. (*Terrified.*) Held nothing base, nothing sordid——

Tanguay. Yes, go on!

Annette. That life was one sweet, happy dream——

Tanguay. Perfect sunshine——

Annette. Sweet peace, and that in this paradise came a vision.

Tanguay. (*Drawing her closer.*) A vision of some one——

Annette. Who was higher than earth——

Tanguay. Someone who was strong—— (*Struggling with himself.*)

Annette. Some one who was strong—— someone who was noble.

Tanguay. (*Bowing his head.*) Some one who was noble——

Annette. And some one who was brave.

Tanguay. And that some one bade you remember——

Annette. That in this sweet sunshine there was a higher plane——

Tanguay. A plane you had not reached. Oh! Annette, darling, help me.

Annette. Yes, Alfred.

Tanguay. Help me. Was I that vision to call you to a higher plane? To a perfect bliss?

Annette. Yes, Alfred.

Tanguay. And can I be myself and burst these bonds?

Annette. Yes, Alfred—— oh! Why (*A cry as she throws herself into his arms.*) you can.

Tanguay. And can I be the perfect nobleman?

Annette. (*Sobbing.*) My darling, you are.

Tanguay. (*Rising and holding her in his arms.*) Then, before God I will. (*Pause.*) Annette, they are coming!

Annette. Oh! I must run. (*Kisses him and goes out.*)

Tanguay. My God, that check! That devil of a Nevers! But I will not believe it. *Enter HOUGHTON, LADY MARY, LORD NEVERS, MR. and MRS. BAMPTON et al.*

Mrs. Bampton. Oh! you have a surprise? I am so glad.

Mrs. Courtenay. You are not going to tell us we are sure to go to heaven, that would surprise most of us more than anything else.

Baby. Oh! Mr. Houghton, I really thought it was candy, from the happy look you had.

Lord Nevers. We seem to have had several surprises in the last few days. I wonder if this can really stir us up to interest.

Houghton. I really think it can.

Bampton. My good fellow, do not delay. Our curiosity is growing.

Houghton. Quite the thing, the greater your curiosity the greater will be your surprise.

Nevers. (*Yawning.*) Do please begin, reverend sir. (*With a sneer.*)

Mrs. Courtenay. Oh! don't let us bother, Nevers, it is sure to be a sermon.

Lady Mary. I am not sure we do not all need a good lecture.

Houghton. Well, to begin, I have learned there is a detective in the house. I am not sure about English law, but it seems to me there is some kind of penalty attached to such doings. (*NEVERS and MRS. COURTENAY start.*) A certain check signed by the Marquis of San Lucar was abstracted from Miss Palmerston's desk, and while it was returned, comes very near to being called larceny. (*NEVERS gets uneasy.*) Owing to that check being in Miss Palmerston's possession unfavorable comments were made about her. It seems, then, in simple justice to her, that this very simple matter should be cleared up. I am the Marquis of San Lucar. (*General consternation.*)

Mrs. Courtenay. (*Raising her glass and staring, then recovering herself.*) The Marquis of San Lucar, why of course, we ought to have known it. Pray forgive our stupidity. How very delightful, and isn't it romantic?

Mrs. Bampton. (Gasping.) The Marquis of San Lucar, and Annette never told me?

Mr. Bampton. I knew there was something up. I know that was why I took so to you.

Lady Mary. The Marquis of San Lucar! really, I am ashamed of you.

San Lucar. My dear Lady Mary, what can you possibly mean?

Lady Mary. Mean, you ought to know. Mean—— (*She flounces out.*)

San Lucar. (Walking away.) I trust, Mrs. Courtenay, you are not shocked too?

Mrs. Courtenay. Oh! not in the least. Come on, Nevers, we will go with the marquis. (*Exeunt.*)

Baby. I say, Johnny, it is better than candy.

Johnny. Oh! come on and see the fun. Lady Mary is going to have a fit. (*Exeunt.*)

Tanguay. (Who, at one side, has heard the confession, and is quite overcome.) My God, my God! from his own lips, and he here! I won't believe the beasts. I won't! There was someone who was higher than earth—— My God, who was strong—— Oh! how weak I am—— who raised her to a higher plane—— Oh! help me, God Almighty, to be strong. Oh! help me to be brave—— Oh! I will, I love her and she loves me. The Earl of Tanguay will fade out of sight—— and oh! Lord, have mercy, let the noble man remain.

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

SCENE.—*Hall of Clampton. Time.—Before luncheon. Enter*

BAMPTON. *Gazing around in a perplexed manner.*

Bampton. Huh—— the old lady has let me in this time for a regular music hall act. She knows I hate variety shows. Regular old theme, sweet persecuted girl, all innocence and purity, but raking in the shekels, nevertheless. Noble lord, under great financial stress, in love with said persecuted female. Gang of heartless conspirators egging the two innocents on to their own destruction. Vindictive mother, I mean sister, vowing fire and brimstone. Mysterious person turning out to be a prince in disguise. Huh—— it's all right for the stage setting, but the actors don't seem to come to time. And there is no innocent little dove to be dangled over the precipice by the villain, and scream for help—— (*Enter BABY, hearing last few words.*)

Baby. Yes, there is, what do you want better than me?

Bampton. Oh! it's you! (*Waking up.*)

Baby. Just in time, now dangle me over the brink.

Bampton. But, my dear, I am not the villain. I am the hero to rescue you.

Baby. Well then, hurry up and find the villain. I want to be rescued. It will be such fun—— and I am so innocent. (*Crosses her eyes and looks helpless.*)

Bampton. Huh! you want to be a heroine.

Baby. Of course I do! Every girl longs to be a heroine. What do I read novels for if it isn't just too lovely to think what I would do in such a situation?

Bampton. What would you do in the present situation?

Baby. Fall in love with the handsome marquis, of course.

Bampton. But he has a wife!

Baby. So have you!

Bampton. (*Meditatively.*) Yes, that is true. Wives are not bad things.

Baby. (*Innocently.*) Not when they are American heiresses.

Bampton. Little trying sometimes.

Baby. (*With a demure look.*) Well, you don't always have to fall in love with your wife.

Bampton. Huh, there is something true in what you say.

Baby. But, do you know, I already love the marquis madly? Yes, just madly! He's so romantic. Why, mamma said it was such a pity he was married to that old frump. She feels awfully sorry for him, so do I.

Bampton. (*Looking at BABY inquiringly.*) She does?

Baby. Yes, she says he is so distinguished. Can't quite see how she never saw it before.

Bampton. She did?

Baby. Yes, she says he is really noble. One of nature's noblemen——

Bampton. And Dom Pedro's!

Baby. Yes, of course, nature and monarchs always play together, you know. Something about divine right.

Bampton. What a lot you know—— for a child.

Baby. I'm not a child. (*Pouts.*)

Bampton. No?

Baby. No, I am just a baby.

Bampton. Well, you are so innocent, tell me what you think of this fairy tale we have here.

Baby. What fairy tale?

Bampton. About the Marquis of San Lucar and Miss Palmerston.

Baby. Why, Mr. Bampton, what are you talking about? The Marquis of San Lucar and Miss Palmerston, it sounds awful!

Bampton. Oh! I see, you are too young to know about such things.

Baby. I don't know what things you mean. But I do know my mamma thinks the marquis such a nice man—— and so good—— and——

Bampton. Oh! so good, huh!

Baby. And she says Miss Palmerston is one of the sweetest girls she ever met.

Bampton. Oh! he is so good, and she is so sweet, huh—— (*JOHNNY enters.*)

Johnny. Who is so sweet?

Baby. I am, Mr. Bampton just said so.

Bampton. You little barefaced humbug.

Baby. Now call me names. But, Johnny, isn't Miss Palmerston just sweet?

Bampton. Just explain that ten thousand pound check.

Baby. Explain that check? Why, I heard mamma say to Lady Mary if she had to explain every check she got she would go crazy.

Bampton. Huh—— and what did Lady Mary say?

Baby. Why, she said—— now what did she say? Did you hear, Johnny?

Johnny. Yes, she said she quite believed her.

Baby. Oh! yes, and mamma went right off in a huff and she said some people who thought themselves so good weren't any better than they might be. And, Johnny, now I think of it, she looked straight at you. Aren't you good?

Johnny. Your mamma knows a lot more than is good for her.

Baby. My mamma is all right. I love my mamma.

Bampton. (*Smiling.*) So far as I can find out you love everybody, kind of a family failing, eh!——

Baby. I don't know what you mean, but I love Miss Palmerston and the Marquis of San Lucar. Mamma said I might. (*Enter MADAME DE SAN LUCAR.*)

Madame de San Lucar. I am very glad if you love my husband, and you are very wise to love Miss Palmerston. They both like children.

Baby. (*Making a courtesy, but not relishing the children.*) Yes, Madame, but Mr. Bampton was trying to make out that I should not love Miss Palmerston.

Madame de San Lucar. He did, why, I wonder?

Bampton. My dear Marquise, don't believe her.

Baby. You did, you said it was about the ten thousand pound check.

Bampton. (*Embarrassed.*) I am sure you are laboring under a mistake.

Baby. You did! You said this was a fairy tale about the Marquis and Miss Palmerston, and you——

Bampton. I didn't what a capacity for mischief you have got.

Mme. de San Lucar. But, Mr. Bampton, there seems to have been something in your mind that needs explanation.

Baby. He doesn't understand why the Marquis gives Miss Palmerston ten thousand pound checks, that is all. I don't think his mind works right, does it, Johnny?

Johnny. I don't know, it always goes and goes——

Baby. Yes, that's just it. It goes and goes—— and it never knows where it is going.

Mme. de San Lucar. I thought the matter had been sufficiently cleared up. I will find my husband. (*Exit.*)

Bampton. A nice mess you have made of it!

Baby. You called me a little barefaced humbug, so there!

Bampton. You are worse!

Baby. You mustn't call me names, I won't have it. Stand up for me, Johnny!

Johnny. I'll stand up for you, sweetheart. (*Enter LADY MARY and NEVERS.*)

Lady Mary. Did you say sweetheart? Really, you and Baby are growing up. Mr. Bampton, I am ashamed of you to let these children act so. As I was saying—— now what was I saying? Lord Nevers, it doesn't matter in the least what either you or Mrs. Courtenay say, or in fact what you do. (*Exit JOHNNY and BABY.*) I am going to leave Do you hear, Mr. Bampton? It is all very well for your wife, who, I know, is an excellent and good woman. Now what was I saying—— yes, for her to stand up for Miss Palmerston. It is all very well, but I won't, it is too much! At least it is false pretences, and the scandal of the check——

Bampton. Scandal—— did you say scandal? Don't say it.

Lady Mary. But I think it.

Bampton. Don't say all you think, I never do.

Lady Mary. (*Severely.*) I did not know you ever thought. I thought you always said without thinking.

Bampton. My dear Lady Mary, you surprise me.

Lady Mary. I think and I act. I acquit your wife of all intentional wrong doing. I only think she is too easily led. She must have been too easily married. (*NEVERS exit.*)

Bampton. Me, why, Lady Mary, I entirely fail to understand you.

Lady Mary. That is why you are happy. People who

understand things are never happy.

Bampton. How very miserable you must be, and I had always supposed you so happy.

Lady Mary. You did? Well, I am not! I am miserable. I have ruined my life by doing for others.

Bampton. (*Quizzically.*) And been so misunderstood?

Lady Mary. I may have been misunderstood, but I have gone on straight in the path of duty.

Bampton. Oh!

Lady Mary. You do not have to say oh! it's insulting. I have helped the unfortunate——

Bampton. Oh!

Lady Mary. I have tried to help my family—— I have stood between my brother——

Bampton. And happiness!

Lady Mary. Nothing of the sort! Between him and poverty. I have put my trust in a fair-faced adventuress——

Bampton. You don't mean Mrs. Bampton?

Lady Mary. Certainly not! Your poor wife is only a fool, and you are the living exemplification of it.

Bampton. Huh—— just a kind of aristocratic sign post.

Lady Mary. Not even that! The sign is so obscured by age few can read it.

Bampton. Only the aged, I suppose, who remember me in my youth.

Lady Mary. You are insulting. For an English gentleman——

Bampton. I act like a lord, huh—— Nevers, for instance. I won't say Tanguay.

Lady Mary. Shame to talk to a lady so.

Bampton. I never do.

Lady Mary. You are no gentleman.

Bampton. Such remarks are reserved for one's wife.

Lady Mary. You mean I say it to Johnson? I do, he deserves it. (*Enter TANGUAY.*) I have found you at last. What did you do with yourself when that miserable marquis threw off his disguise and came out in his true colors?

Tanguay. I went for a walk.

Lady Mary. You might better have seen to your packing. Has your man got it done?

Tanguay. He has not been told I am going.

Lady Mary. But you are going? I have looked for you everywhere, and I have looked for Miss Palmerston too. I couldn't find her. I suppose you have been with her.

Tanguay. I have not been so lucky as to meet her.

Lady Mary. But you must at least have tried to say good-bye.

Tanguay. In fact it never occurred to me.

Lady Mary. But you must at least be decent. We can't run out of the house as though it were a pest house, although it really is. I actually shudder at the thought!

Bampton. Pest house! goodness gracious, has anyone got the smallpox?

Lady Mary. Something far worse. Tanguay, go at once and tell your man we leave on the three forty-five.

Tanguay. But I am not going on the three forty-five.

Lady Mary. What?

Tanguay. I like it here, and I see no reason to leave.

Lady Mary. After the awful disclosures?

Tanguay. (Coolly.) What disclosures?

Lady Mary. The check for ten thousand pounds.

Tanguay. (Ill at ease, and Bampton laughs.) The check for ten thousand pounds, what of that?

Lady Mary. (Impatient.) Tanguay, you will drive me mad.

Bampton. Please don't go mad, you really have got to restrain yourself.

Lady Mary. Tanguay, you must leave! I am going on the three forty-five and you must go with me. I do believe you are quite daft about that woman!

Tanguay. Well, I am.

Bampton. Goodness gracious! when she hasn't a cent?

Lady Mary. (With a sneer.) But the ten thousand pounds.

Tanguay. (Defiant.) Well, that is something. Perhaps my price isn't as high as yours or Bampton's.

Lady Mary. What, sell yourself for ten thousand pounds.

Tanguay. I had as lief sell myself for ten thousand pounds as for a million. When it comes to a money bargain one price is as de-v-stable as another. You and Bampton sold yourselves for more than you were worth, so you cheated

your respective partners. I am worth very little, and if Miss Palmerston is willing to take me, I will go at any price.

Lady Mary. How vulgar! how very vulgar!

Bampton. (*Indignant.*) How outrageously vulgar! I think now, Lady Mary, you ought to be sorry you said those things to me just now.

Lady Mary. (*In wrath.*) I am sorry I ever lived. After all I have done, all I have suffered to have it end like that, and the Tanguay peerage to go to such a thing—

Tanguay. Stop! Miss Palmerston is going to be the Countess of Tanguay if ever there is one, and I will not have you say anything against her. In fact you have no reason. The check was a perfectly legitimate transaction, and the presence here of Madame de San Lucar certainly makes everything correct. It is entirely that devil of a Nevers and that Courtenay woman who have put ideas into your head. I shall stay just as long as Miss Palmerston permits.

Lady Mary. You know, Tanguay, I am no great stickler for morality, but I do draw the line at appearances.

Tanguay. But who has made the appearances?

Lady Mary. We were enticed here under false pretences.

Tanguay. You were the very first to accept those false pretences. When I rebelled at being thrown at Miss Palmerston's head as a desirable catch, I said I would never marry a woman capable of enduring such an indignity.

Lady Mary. (*With a sneer.*) But you came?

Tanguay. Yes, I came, but I came, and I told you so, saying that I would never marry the heiress.

Lady Mary. But now you are going to.

Tanguay. I am not so sure.

Lady Mary. I am delighted to hear it.

Tanguay. I am not at all sure that she would have me. She has ideas of her own.

Lady Mary. Oh! I am so glad she has a little sense of decency.

Tanguay. I won't hear such talk. She knows her own mind best.

Lady Mary. And you say she will not marry you?

Tanguay. She hasn't said she would.

Lady Mary. Ah! I see, you are poor, and she is after money, of course. Naturally she wouldn't marry you. I quite understand!

Tanguay. You do not understand, you never could understand, you have not even the faintest idea of the reason she would have not to marry me. You couldn't have after marrying Johnson, you could not possibly understand the motives of such a woman.

Lady Mary. (*With rage.*) Tanguay, I wash my hands of you henceforth. You shall go your own way.

Tanguay. I will go my own way. I am going to seek Miss Palmerston. I am going to assure her of my determination. I will stand by her no matter what happens.

Lady Mary. (*With a sneer.*) You are in love!

Tanguay. I am in love, and if one is in love and cannot stand by the woman he loves, he is not fit to ever have a loving, trusting wife, or be called a man. I will be called a man before I will be called a social dead beat. If I am deceived, I will be deceived. There would have been few martyrs if all men and all women were like those we have known.

Lady Mary. A woman with her past!

Tanguay. Past or no past, I love her, I believe in her; in her for what she is now. Surely I am not one to cast stones at her. If she will forgive me, I will forgive her. (*Exit.*)

Bampton. Really, Lady Mary, he almost takes my breath away.

Lady Mary. He entirely takes mine away. What a fool—— and no money.

Bampton. Really, Lady Mary, I must go and find the old lady, she does not know what she is missing. (*NEVERS enters.*) My dear fellow, you are just too late.

Nevers. What's up?

Bampton. Oh! Lady Mary is just going to have hysterics, and Tanguay has lost his head, and Baby actually sauced me back, and, as Lady Mary will probably faint in a minute, your manly bosom will come in handy. (*Exit.*)

Lady Mary. Did you ever see such a fool?

Nevers. (*Smiling.*) Often, my dear Lady Mary, Bampton is a social necessity.

Lady Mary. I suppose he is, but what an awful mess we are in.

Nevers. Are we? You surprise me.

Lady Mary. Of course we are! I suppose Mrs. Courtenay has been attending to her packing?

Nevers. Not that I know of. You quite surprise me.

Lady Mary. You don't mean to say she intends to remain?

Nevers. I quite think she does.

Lady Mary. What, after this awful scandal?

Nevers. I know of no scandal. I do remember you got very excited and said something hasty to the marquis. Do you mean he resented it?

Lady Mary. Resented it? He resented it? A nice one he would be to resent the natural indignation of an outraged woman.

Nevers. I fear, Lady Mary, I am entirely at a loss to grasp your meaning.

Lady Mary. Well, I never——

Nevers. Oh! indeed, never? How very positive you are.

Lady Mary. And that creature!

Nevers. What creature? Are there animals around? Now, really? (*Puts up his glass and surveys LADY MARY serenely.*)

Lady Mary. (*Still more exasperated.*) Do you mean to tell me, Lord Nevers, you are quite lost to all decency? I mean social decency?

Nevers. Why, my dear friend, long since. That is the reason I enjoy my present peace of mind. Take my advice and lose yours just as fast as you can. It pays, I assure you.

Lady Mary. Well, you are cool, you are almost heroic! May I ask why you introduced a detective into the house if you had no intention of making use of the information he had gained?

Nevers. I have made use of it. It has warned me not to propose to a young woman who has no money. It was worth all it cost!

Lady Mary. But after you gained that information and saved your life from probable wreck, pray why did you continue here?

Nevers. Simply because I was invited, and so far I have found it very agreeable. And then, because I see no reason for going. You raised the issue as to the source of the money we are enjoying. Surely you know Johnson made his by selling beer, and afterwards by squeezing the market.

Lady Mary. We will drop that subject.

Nevers. Oh! no, we will not, because it happens that both you and I are living on money gotten by unpleasant agencies. I am quite aware that my ancestors did dirty work for our virgin queen. Bless her old heart, she must have had a prophetic dream of how I would need the money. Take my advice, Lady Mary, accept what the gods give you, and what you can readily and safely take, and don't, just because you are safe from starvation, be hard on those who are not.

Lady Mary. Well I never—

Nevers. Your life, dear Lady Mary, seems to have been made up of omissions. I think I understand the prayer book better since I have known you. You are indeed a missionary. (*LADY MARY is speechless. Enter ANNETTE. She glares at her and goes out.*)

Annette. What has happened to her? (*Smiling.*)

Nevers. She has lost something, and has not the grit to bear her loss with equanimity.

Annette. Oh! that is too bad, what is it?

Nevers. Money!

Annette. Then I do not wonder, but it must have been a lot to have caused such a look. (*Enter TANGUAY.*)

Tanguay. I have found you at last.

Annette. Have you been looking?

Nevers. I really must go and console Lady Mary.

Annette. Yes do! (*Exit NEVERS.*) And you have been looking for me?

Tanguay. Yes, you fled so precipitately. And have you heard nothing?

Annette. No, what do you mean?

Tanguay. Oh! nothing!

Annette. You do mean something, please tell me.

Tanguay. You—— I can't tell you.

Annette. But you must.

Tanguay. You know about San Lucar?

Annette. (*Startled.*) The marquis, yes——

Tanguay. Then I need not tell you any more.

Annette. But—— I don't know what you mean.

Tanguay. But, Annette, of course you know. I have nothing to tell you.

Annette. (*Distressed.*) Of course I know—— I mean——

Tanguay. Annette! what is it, tell me?

Annette. But tell me all you know.

Tanguay. (*Worried.*) All I know?

Annette. Yes, tell me all you know.

Tanguay. (*Walking away and choking.*) I know very little. Mr. Houghton——

Annette. (*Starting.*) Mr. Houghton——

Tanguay. (*Recovering himself.*) Why, Annette, darling, you know, of course, that Mr. Houghton is just the Marquis of San Lucar in disguise?

Annette. (*Hesitating.*) Well——

Tanguay. Well, he came in to tell—— the people—— that——

Annette. You stammer?

Tanguay. No, I don't stammer. (*Trying to laugh.*)

Annette. You do! There is something I do not know.

Tanguay. Is there? (*Hopeful.*) What don't you know?

Annette. (*Agitated.*) Why, about this—— this marquis—— of San Lucar.

Tanguay. Oh! my God, can I stand this? Why is she not frank? (*Aside.*)

Annette. You do not answer me. Alfred, please!

Tanguay. (*Going to her.*) Yes, dear. It is only that he said he was the Marquis of San Lucar, and he hoped that would clear up any misunderstanding that we might have.

Annette. He did, he said that?

Tanguay. Yes, isn't Mr. Houghton the Marquis of San Lucar?

Annette. Yes, but why should he come forward and say so——

Tanguay. Why not say so, if he is?

Annette. But you said it was to clear up something.

Tanguay. Did I? (*Affecting carelessness.*) Oh! I forgot.

Annette. You are trying to keep something from me.

Tanguay. Well, if I am, do I do anything wrong?

Annette. But it seems I ought to know.

Tanguay. It was nothing! Just a little something about money, I believe.

Annette. About money, what could it be?

Tanguay. About nothing much. Only the marquis said he had heard something that made it better that he should own up to his real character. Everyone seemed delighted, and Mrs. Courtenay remarked that there was something very distinguished about him.

Annette. I must see him at once.

Tanguay. (*Struggling with himself.*) Don't go now, there is plenty of time.

Annette. But it worries me, I must see him. I must learn what made him take this step. (*Starts to go out.*)

Tanguay. Stay, it is almost time for luncheon. You can see him then.

Annette. True! (*Uneasily.*)

Tanguay. It is all cleared up. You know this morning you made me very happy.

Annette. Ah! Alfred, it was you that made me happy.

Tanguay. I am glad I could, my darling.

Annette. It seems to me as though I understood as I never understood before——

Tanguay. What was it, sweetheart?

Annette. (*Laying her head against his arm.*) You know in the service——

Tanguay. Yes! (*Putting his arm around her.*)

Annette. For better, for worse—— Oh! Alfred, it is so glorious to have some one trust you.

Tanguay. Yes, my dear! (*His face distorted.*)

Annette. And to have that one strong.

Tanguay. Yes, strong!

Annette. And there is a higher plane, and to that higher plane you and I can go together.

Tanguay. Yes, oh! yes.

(Enter SAN LUCAR, LADY MARY, his wife and the rest following as DUMBELL announces luncheon.)

San Lucar. As I was saying, Lady Mary, you do not yet understand the situation. As you are aware I really am a freak.

Lady Mary. A freak, what is that?

San Lucar. A freak, dear madam, is the American term for something unusual.

Lady Mary. Well, you are that!

San Lucar. It pleases me to state I am. I was always unusual. The usual bored me extremely.

Lady Mary. But you posed as a clergyman of the church.

San Lucar. I am. I started out in life with the intention of being a good one.

Lady Mary. (With emphasis.) Well, if you were, that was certainly unusual.

San Lucar. You see I had no chance, for just as I had laid all my plans for being a good clergyman my poor uncle whom the whole family had forgotten, in fact had long considered dead, did really pass away and leave me any amount of property. This property is the vexation of my life. I am disinclined to manage it myself, and so have been looking for an honest man to do it for me.

Lady Mary. Is it so difficult?

San Lucar. Rather. I must have a gentleman, a man of honor, an honest man, and one with brains.

Lady Mary. Really, marquis, you want the earth.

San Lucar. Well, yes, but strange as it may seem, I have found my man.

Lady Mary. (Putting up her glass.) Really, and where did you find him?

San Lucar. Right here!

Lady Mary. Here, where? (Gazing around.)

San Lucar. Your brother, the Earl of Tanguay. He confided to me this morning that he wanted to earn a decent living. I told him I thought I could help him. We have agreed. He is to go out to the Argentine at a certain salary with ample opportunities to do for himself.

Lady Mary. But, Marquis, this does not explain the unhappy matter to which I alluded.

San Lucar. Oh! you mean the ten thousand pound check and the unpleasant construction put on it by Lord Nevers.

Annette. (*Starting.*) What is this? (*To TANGUAY.*)

Tanguay. Hush! (*She leans on his arm.*)

San Lucar. I think Lord Nevers understands that matter fully. (*NEVERS bows.*) I regret you persist in continuing the subject, Annette, Miss Palmerston, is a very old friend of my wife. She is clever, with great social experience. When I wished to find a man I could trust, and see something also of English society, I asked her to take a house in England and gather about her a circle of friends and let me be one of her guests in my true character, a clergyman and a seeker after truth, and not in the garish light of a South American Croesus, a role as unpleasant to me as it is difficult to maintain. That you did not know the truth does not in my mind alter the situation. Neither Miss Palmerston nor I have appeared in any false light, simply in our true colors. If certain phases of English society desire to find in Annette a great heiress, we surely are not to blame. And if you are a little bitter because you consider she accepted checks to pay my bills, against what you esteem the accepted dictum of your set, you have, I think, Lady Mary, your own haste to blame.

Mrs. Courtenay. I think, my dear Marquis, it has been all very foolish. I for one consider Lady Mary Johnson not only to have been bitter, but unkind.

Nevers. Surely, Lady Mary, you must admit you have precipitated a most distressing scene.

Baby. Mamma, do you suppose Miss Palmerston would just let me hold that ten thousand pound check for a minute? (*ANNETTE starts.*)

Mrs. Courtenay. Hush!

Bampton. You little nuisance!

Johnny. Let's eat.

Mrs. Bampton. I trust, Lady Mary, you are quite content. The Marquis and Marquise are passing into the dining room. (*Exeunt all but TANGUAY and ANNETTE. ANNETTE has withdrawn behind some palms, and TANGUAY, at one side, looks at her. After all the others have entered the dining room she comes forward.*)

Annette. Alfred—— Alfred!

Tanguay. (*Moving up.*) Yes, dearest.

Annette. Did you hear about the check?

Tanguay. Yes I heard. (*Radiant.*)

Annette. And is it true?

Tanguay. Is what true?

Annette. Is it true that—— that check—— a—— mis-apprehension?

Tanguay. Yes, dear, it did!

Annette. And did they—— think—— think—— oh! Alfred—— did they (*Gasping*) think——

Tanguay. (*Disturbed.*) Did they think—— what?

Annette. Did they think—— oh! Alfred, I can't say it. (*Buries her face in his shoulder.*)

Tanguay. Don't think of it, darling, it is not worth while.

Annette. (*Recovering herself.*) Oh! my God, Alfred. Lord Tanguay, tell me, did you believe it? That—— that thing—— did—— you believe it?

Tanguay. (*Disturbed.*) I love you!

Annette. You believed—— believed—— believed—— it can't be true.

Tanguay. (*Eagerly.*) It is not true.

Annette. You heard me maligned—— you heard proof—— Lady Mary seemed certain—— it must have seemed like proof—— and you—— you—— you. Oh! God, what am I saying? You loved me, you heard I was bad, you had evidence of my sin—— and you loved me—— you—— still love me and stood by me?

Tanguay. I should always stand by you.

Annette. You could love me when everything was against me.

Tanguay. Yes!

Annette. You could be true to me when your reason and your common sense told you better?

Tanguay. Oh! Annette.

Annette. Tell me, Alfred, you could love me even then?

Tanguay. For better or for worse!

Annette. (*Moving close to him, and laying her hand on his shoulder.*) I saw a vision—— I see it now. A vision of someone who was higher than earth—— someone who was

strong—— who was noble—— who was fearless—— who was brave. (TANGUAY *bores his head.*) And this someone bade me remember in this sweet sunshine, this perfect bliss, there was a higher plane—— (TANGUAY'S *head sinks lower.*) and to that plane I had not reached. (*She sinks on her knees and kisses his hand.*) Alfred, I am not worthy to be your wife, I am frivolous and vain. But if you will take me to that far off land I will come to the plane to which you may lead me. Alfred, dearest, I am not wicked, only weak. But you have been, and are, my vision, my sweet vision, leading me to perfect peace. (*He raises her in his arms and kisses her.*)

CURTAIN

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